Selling Wild Borneo

Iban Longhouse Tourism in Sarawak

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A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the Australian National University

March 2003

Except where cited in the text, this work is the result of research carried out by the author.

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Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been possible without the help of numerous people and institutions. As this thesis has been written and researched in many locations, I shall thank people by reference to those locations.

In Canberra at the Australian National University (ANU) sincere thanks go to my supervisors, Dr Christine Helliwell and Dr Patrick Guinness. Without their unwavering belief in my research proposal and my ability to bring it to fruition this thesis would never have been completed. Christine and Patrick's commitment to this project and the effort they have put into supervising me, both in Canberra and from a distance while I have been living in Perth, has been a constant source of inspiration, especially when living so far away from ANU tested my perseverance and made it increasingly difficult for me to see the end. Christine and Patrick's supervision has been remarkable for their willingness to humour my long-winded conversations over the telephone in what were sometimes bizarre circumstances, including on inner city trains and while in remote Aboriginal communities in Australia. Their help in assisting me to develop the ideas in this thesis has been invaluable (although the responsibility for its contents is, of course, mine). Finally, I recommend the 'good cop bad cop' routine as a method of supervision. Christine and Patrick's performance was supervisory theatre of the highest quality. I could never predict which one of them would terrify or gently guide me into writing the next part of the thesis.

Also from the ANU I have benefited from the support of Dr Nicolas Petersen, Dr Francesca Merlan, Dr Chris Gregory, Dr Penny Graham, Ms Kathy Callen, Ms Sue Fraser, Mr Dave Macgregor and Mr Halim Gadji. Special thanks goes to Dr David Martin and Dr Julie Finlayson for sending me out to Mount Isa in far north-western Queensland and teaching me what anthropology is about all over again. Julie and David not only provided me with a means to live while writing up much of this thesis, but also instilled in me the confidence to do so. I vividly remember a moment in Mount Isa

while undertaking anthropological research in the Australian setting when I realised why I really wanted to write this thesis.

Among my fellow students at the ANU I make special mention of Dr Bradley Armstrong, Dr Derek Elias, Ms Klara Hansen, Dr Peter Toner, Mr Goran Sevo, Mr Ian Bryson, Mr Ludger Dinkler and Ms Christiane Keller. The strength of these friendships forms an inestimable part of the fabric of this thesis. In Canberra I must also thank Ms Averil Ginn, whose charming bluntness about life, anthropology and thesis-writing helped me make many right decisions.

From Sydney University I must thank Dr Wayne Mullen and Dr Nic Rogers. Also in Sydney I would like to thank Ms Jane Shadbolt and Mr Simon Wale for their advice and unfailing support throughout the length of the project. Dr Amanda Harris from the University of Newcastle, Australia, responded enthusiastically to my never-ending queries about the Iban and Sarawak. I am grateful for her friendship and support, both in the field and in Australia. Ms Anna Edmundson accompanied me on my first field trip to Sarawak and her contribution to that early and difficult stage of the project is acknowledged.

In Sarawak thanks go to the staff of the Sarawak Museum, especially Dr Peter Kedit, Mr Tazudin Mohtar, Mr Tuton Kaboy, Ms Magdaline Kuih and Mr Edmund Kurri. Dr James Masing was of invaluable assistance. Above all, Mr Lemon Praddy Ales made the fieldwork for this thesis possible, taught me how the Sarawak tourism industry worked and helped make my stay in Sarawak the amazing experience that it was. Lemon's commitment to this thesis was unshaken during my more recent visit to Sarawak at a time when the only evidence that it would be finished was my continued assurances. Lemon's friendship is an outcome of this thesis that I cherish.

At Stamang longhouse special thanks go to Pengulu Rentap and Tuai Rumah Sunok and their families. Pengulu Rentap and Tuai Rumah Sunok made me feel welcome, looked

after me and patiently taught me about longhouse life and tourism business. Thanks also go to Gindi, who was a great teacher of Iban and who took the time to explain so many things (often more than once). Also at Stamang, Lumpong, Lydia, Kudi, Kilat and Doreen must be thanked for their assistance and friendship. At Mejong longhouse Mr Jeffry Keroh deserves thanks for assistance early in the fieldwork.

Also in Sarawak, I would like to thank Mr Jimmy Lee, from the Borneo Tranverse Tour Company and all the staff of the Asian Overland Services Kuching Branch office. Ms Heidi Munan's thoughts on longhouse tours were a great help, along with her encouragement at a time when I was trying to make sense of an environment that was a blur of tourists and Iban. In Sarawak, Mr Goran Christenson, Director of the Malmo Museum in Sweden, was a great help and an enthusiastic supporter of the project. Lastly, of the people whom I met a Sarawak and contributed to this thesis a special ackowledgement must be given to Mr Kjartan Eide from the Department and Museum of Anthropology at the University of Olso. Kjartan assisted me greatly in the field and the many conversations we had about longhouse tourism were of enormous benefit.

In Perth, I wish to thank the members of the thesis-writing seminar at the University of Western Australia (UWA) who provided critical feedback and support during the last stages of writing. In particular, Ms Mandy Wilson, Ms Sharyn Graham and Mr Brendan Corrigan. Mr Romit Dasgupta from the Asian Studies Department deserves special mention for his encouragement and thoughts about the thesis. Thanks to Ms Jenny Bäckström for translating the Swedish text. Also in Perth, this thesis would not have been possible without the support and patience of my workmates at the Indigenous Land Corporation.

My family in Sydney have supported me through this project in a myriad of ways. Imagining having written this thesis without them is impossible. Finally, my most heartfelt thanks go to my wife Amanda. Without you this thesis would never have happened (I suspect you already know this) - so I dedicate it to you.

Synopsis

The thesis is an analysis of the current mode of operation of the organised tour industry to Iban longhouses in Sarawak, East Malaysia, with particular focus on the role of longhouse communities. The thesis examines how Sarawak and longhouse communities are marketed for tourism, together with discussion of material that reveals how the industry is organised and controlled and how Iban communities negotiate their involvement in the industry.

The thesis reveals that the Sarawak travel industry, which is dominated by Malaysian Chinese entrepreneurs and supported by government institutions, insists on promoting a static vision of 'wild Borneo', which defines Iban longhouse communities as unchanging, backward and remote within a Western tradition of Borneo as a location for the exotic. The longhouse tour product is a peculiar mix of past and contemporary aspects of longhouse culture and staged wild Borneo vignettes. Only communities that reside in a suitable 'traditional' longhouse and are willing to perform a tour program of 'wild Borneo' (as it is understood by the tour industry) are invited to participate in tourism.

Although longhouse communities are keen and active participants in tourism, motivated by a desire to earn additional income, the trend is for communities to redevelop their longhouses in a 'modern' style using contemporary building materials. The limited view of Borneo and longhouse life promoted by the longhouse tour industry means that communities that wish to modernise their material surroundings are forced out of the industry.

Introductory notes

The thesis includes reference to monetary amounts marked with the symbol $ MYR, which refers to Malaysian ringgit. $1 Malaysian ringgit equals 100 sen. Any amounts in sen are indicated by the written word 'sen'.

As at March 2003 $1 Malaysian ringgit is equivalent to .44 Australian dollars.

Other currency abbreviations used in the thesis include, $ AUD, for Australian dollars and $ USD, for United States dollars.

As at March 2003 $1 Australian dollar is equivalent to .59 United States dollars.

Pseudonyms have been used in sections of the thesis for longhouse tour operators, longhouse tour companies, longhouse communities, longhouse residents, government officers and other individuals. In particular, pseudonyms have been used in interview quotations and discussion of interview material that refers to the specific commercial arrangements and tourism histories of tour companies and tourist longhouse communities.

There are two exceptions to this rule: the first is the longhouse community and longhouse tour company that were the main focus of the research. Both of them granted formal permission to undertake the research (further detail on the research methodology is provided in Chapter Two). Secondly, pseudonyms have not been used in discussion of the general history of longhouse tourism in Sarawak or when outlining the tour companies and tourist longhouse communities involved in the industry at the time research was undertaken. This includes analysis of publicly available Sarawak tourism

and longhouse tour promotional material. Appendix L is a list of pseudonyms used. All names not included in Appendix L are real.

The text contains some quotations in Iban and some that mix Iban, Malay and English. For Malay words, standard Malay spelling is used. For Iban words, I adopt the spelling used in Anthony Richard's *An Iban English Dictionary* (1997). Where quotations from longhouse residents are included without Iban translations this indicates that the statement was made in English.

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"I read a lot of Conrad"

"For pleasure or to improve your mind?"

"Both. I admire him awfully"

Darya threw up her arms in an extravagant gesture of protest.

"That Pole," she cried. "How can you English ever have let yourselves be taken in by that wordy mountebank? He has all the superficiality of his countrymen. That stream of words, those involved sentences, the showy rhetoric, that affectation of profundity: when you get through all that to the thought at the bottom, what do you find but trivial commonplace? He was like a second-rate actor who puts on a romantic dress and declaims a play by Victor Hugo. For five minutes you say this is heroic, and then your whole soul revolts and you cry, no, this is false, false, false."

She spoke with passion that Neil had never known anyone show when speaking of art or literature. Her cheeks, usually colourless, flushed and her pale eyes glowed.

"There's no one who got atmosphere like Conrad," said Neil. "I can smell and see and feel the East when I read him"

"Nonsense. What do you know about the East? Everyone will tell you he made the grossest blunders. Ask Angus."

"Of course he was not always accurate," said Munro, in his measured, reflective way. "The Borneo he described is not a Borneo we know. He saw it from the deck of a merchant-vessel and he was not an acute observer even of what he saw. But does it matter? I don't know why fiction should be hampered by fact. I don't think it's a mean achievement to have created a country, a dark, sinister, romantic country of the soul."

From the short story *Neil MacAdam* by Somerset Maugham (Freitas 1976:184-186).

Chapter 1: Sarawak and Iban Longhouse Society

Introduction

This thesis discusses organised tourism to Iban longhouse communities in Sarawak, a Malaysian state on the island of Borneo. The Iban are an indigenous people of Borneo and longhouses are a common Iban dwelling and the traditional hub of Iban life.[1]

Iban longhouse tourism takes place in a complex environment that involves longhouse residents managing their engagement with tourism on an inter-family basis within the longhouse, while at the same, as a community, managing a business relationship with non-Iban tour operators. Furthermore, as the tour operators largely control the way the industry is run, Iban longhouse residents have little or no say over the way that longhouse tours are marketed or the manner in which they are conducted. Tour operators systematically promote the Iban as an indigenous race who inhabit the interior of the state, untouched by modernity, and longhouse tours are designed to conform to the same model.

This thesis examines the complex historical processes and contemporary circumstances surrounding longhouse tourism. The focus is on the unique history of the West's understanding of Borneo and how that has influenced the marketing, style and format of longhouse tours. This has resulted in the development of a contradictory and ambiguous longhouse product that sits uncomfortably with the realities of contemporary Iban life. The thesis shows that longhouse communities are willing commercial participants in the industry and that they proactively perform the hybrid version of longhouse life and Borneo jungle people defined by the longhouse tour package product. However, despite their willingness, the peculiar limitations of the product

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[1] In Sarawak many Iban now live in urban centres such as Kuching, Sibu and Sri Aman, while others have abandoned longhouses in favour of stand-alone houses (Jawan 1994:72-75). However, the majority of Iban still reside in longhouses which, given the many pressures and changes brought by modernisation and development, underscores the continued importance of the longhouse to Iban society (King 1993b:223, 273-284; King: 1999a:97).

mean that longhouse residents can only participate in the longhouse tour industry if they adhere to the terms set by the tour operators who define, market and control the product.

As Iban longhouse tourism is unique to the Malaysian state of Sarawak, this chapter begins with a short overview of Sarawak and explains the place of the Iban in Sarawak's social and economic landscape. In addition, the chapter provides an introductory account of the Iban, their social organisation and certain Iban customs and practices, followed by a description of the physical and social nature of Iban longhouses. This material is restricted to that which is necessary to provide a context and a backdrop for later discussion about the distinctive features and problems of the longhouse tour industry and the complexities of how longhouse communities manage their involvement with commercial tourism. The final part of the chapter considers the meaning of 'traditional' Iban longhouse lifestyle in the context of Malaysia's government-led push for 'development' and 'modernisation'. This provides background material for later discussion about the choices made by some longhouse communities involved with organised tourism to upgrade and 'modernise' their longhouses, leading to rejection by the longhouse tour industry. This in turn raises questions about the future direction of the industry, which is an important point of discussion in the thesis.

Sarawak overview

Sarawak is one of the thirteen states of the Federation of Malaysia. It is roughly the size of the United Kingdom (UK) and occupies 124,450 square kilometres of land in the north-west corner of the island of Borneo. Borneo is divided between Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, with Malaysia controlling approximately one third of the island, along its northern side.

The capital city of Sarawak, Kuching, lies in the south-west corner of the state. Further along the coast, heading north-east, is the independent nation of Brunei, with which Sarawak shares an international border. Brunei adjoins Sabah, the other Malaysian

Borneo state (see Map 1). To the south, Sarawak shares an international border with Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo.

Map 1: Regional map showing Sarawak and Kuching. The boxed area indicates the approximate area shown in Map 3, Chapter Three.

According to 2000 census figures, the population of Sarawak is 2,071,506.[2] It consists primarily of a mix of indigenous, non-Muslim (non-Malay) peoples, commonly known as Dayaks (although, in fact, there are a number of separate ethnic groups, including Iban, Kenyah, Kayan, Punan and Bidayuh), indigenous Muslim Malays and local born ethnic Chinese, making Sarawak Malaysia's most ethnically diverse state (King 1993b:29-32). In 2000, indigenous non-Muslim Iban were the largest ethnic group in Sarawak, forming 30.1% of the population (623,523), followed by Chinese at 26.7% (553,092) and Malays at 23.0% (476,446).[3] The majority of the remaining population consists of other, smaller, non-Muslim groups, usually referred to collectively as 'Orang Ulu' (or Dayaks), as well as a small number of Indians, who are mostly Muslim or

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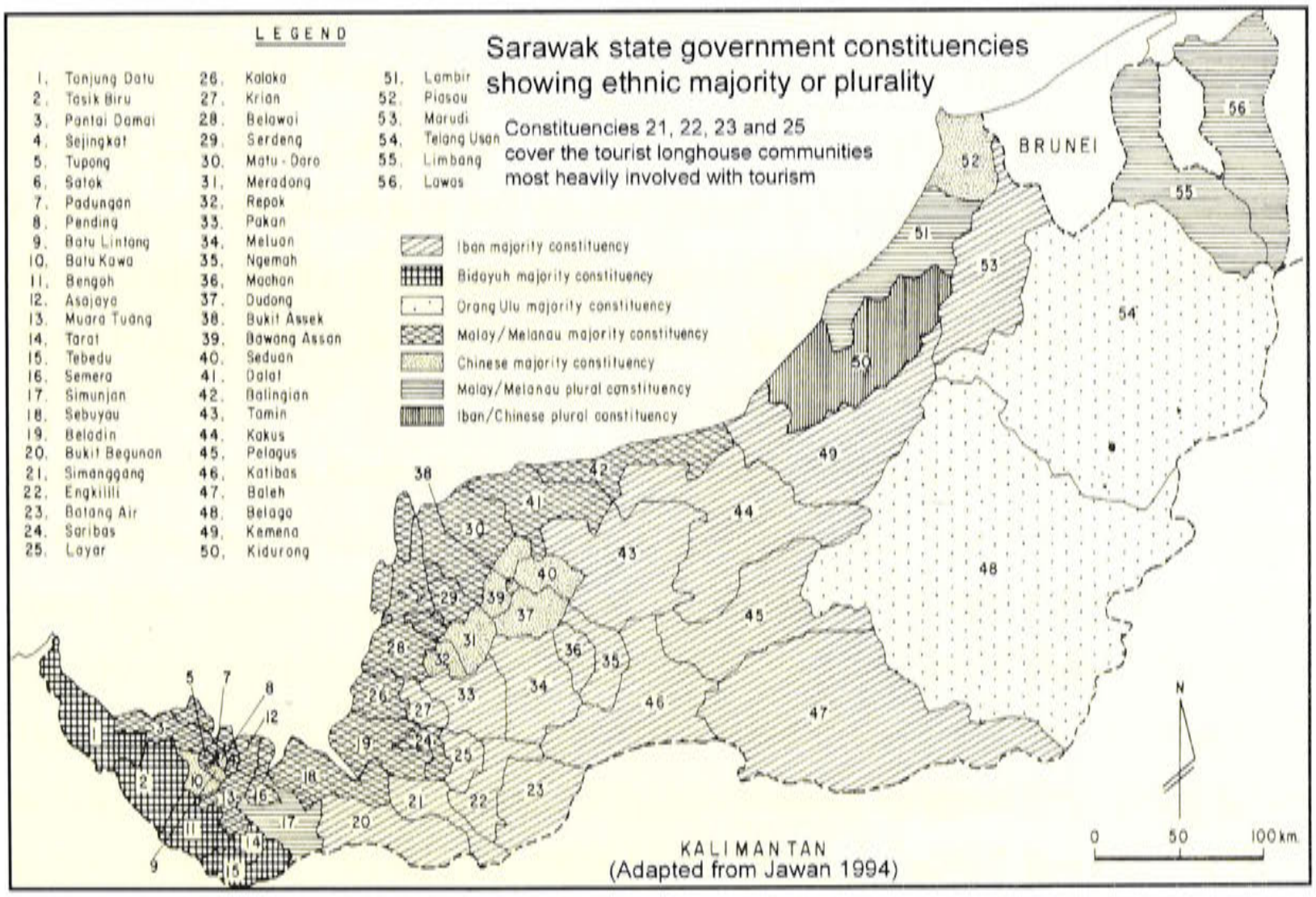
[2] State-by-state population statistics from the 2000 census are available on-line from the National Department of Statistics, Malaysia, at www.statistics.gov.my. However, a more detailed breakdown of the 2000 census is not yet available and, consequently, I rely on the 1988 and 1991 censuses for some statistics.

[3] In comparison, in 1991 Iban made up 29.5% (506,500) of the population (Leete 1996:124). In 1991, Chinese people made up a similar percentage of the population (29%), followed by the Malays (21%) and the Bidayuh (8%) (Jawan 1993:79).

Hindu.[4] The religion of Sarawak's Chinese population is mixed and includes Christians, Taoists and Buddhists. As Map 2 illustrates, different ethnic groups in Sarawak form the majority population in different regions of the state.

Sarawak's climate is tropical, with heavy seasonal rainfall and regularly high humidity. It can be roughly divided into three physiographical regions: coastal lowlands, undulating hilly forested country and a mountainous interior (up to 2,400 metres) along the border with Indonesian Borneo. Until the second half of the twentieth century much of Sarawak's interior was covered with dense, old-growth, tropical rainforest. However, in recent decades intensive and sustained logging has depleted much of Sarawak's forest reserves and widespread economically profitable logging is anticipated to be impossible beyond 2010-2015 (King and Jawan 1996:208; Wee 1995; King 1993b:290-302; King and Parnwell 1999; Oshima 2000:315).



Map 2: Sarawak State Government constituencies with shading showing ethnic majority or plurality.

[4] The umbrella term 'Orang Ulu' includes numerous separate ethnic groups, including the Kenyah, Kayan, Kelabit, Kajang, Lun Bawang, Punan and Penan, as well as other smaller groups (see King 1978:1-36; Boulanger 2000:44-48;

There are numerous navigable rivers in Sarawak, including the Batang Lupar, Batang Rejang and Baram Rivers. They are all key waterways and in daily use for trade and transportation. In addition, Sarawak is home to some extraordinary geological and biological attractions, including the orang-utan, the proboscis monkey, the rafflesia (the world's largest flower) and the Niah Caves, some of the largest caves in the world (Cleary and Eaton 1992:190-210).

Sarawak is rich in natural resources, including tropical hardwood, oil, gas and other minerals. The oil, gas and mineral industries are largely foreign-owned, while the timber industry is dominated by Sarawak Chinese. In addition, Sarawak is the world's largest pepper producer. Other agricultural products produced in Sarawak include palm oil, copra, rubber, coconut oil and cocoa beans (Cramb and Dixon 1988; Cleary and Eaton 1992:155-172; King 1993b:275-283; King 1999a:92-108). Agricultural labour is largely the province of Sarawak's non-Muslim indigenous population, including the Iban, while the agricultural industry is mainly owned by state instrumentalities or Sarawak Chinese. For example, pepper is commonly grown and harvested by Iban longhouse communities who sell the raw pepper to local, usually Chinese, merchants, who on-sell it for further processing. Malays dominate the public sector (Cleary and Eaton 1992; Jawan 1993, 1994; Wee 1995; Berma 2000; King 1993b).

Despite the fact that Sarawak's economy has been growing steadily since the 1960s and at times faster than that of West (peninsular) Malaysia, it remains one of the poorest states in the Malaysian Federation. Sarawak has the second highest overall poverty rate and the second highest rate of rural poverty in Malaysia, following Sabah (Wee 1995:110-111).[5] Compared with Malaysia's other states, it has the lowest number of sealed roads, and a large percentage of the non-Muslim, indigenous population continue to live a semi-subsistence, rural lifestyle, based largely around swidden rice farming (King 1993b). Malnutrition is high, along with high infant mortality rates, and rates of disease and premature death are higher than the national average (Wee 1995:100-140;

Rousseau 1990).

[5] These observations on poverty are based on statistics developed by the National Department of Statistics, Malaysia. Wee notes that the Department uses 'a somewhat arbitrary' measure called the Poverty Line Income (PLI), a figure set at $429 MYR per month for the average Sarawak household of 5.24 persons, as the monthly household earnings below which a household is defined as poor (Wee 1995:104-106).

Jawan 1994). Historically, the Iban have been among the poorest of Sarawak's ethnic groups, a situation that remains today. The Iban (and other non-Muslim indigenous peoples) have minimal involvement in any economic activity other than agricultural cash cropping and low wage labour (Jawan 1993, 1994; Berma 2000).

Sarawak's history is unique among the states of Malaysia and other Asian countries. Prior to 1841 Sarawak was a territory of the Sultanate of Brunei. In 1839 the English adventurer James Brooke arrived in Sarawak on his yacht *The Royalist* with the intention of exploration and trade. In the following two years Brooke, with the Royal Navy, assisted the Sultan of Brunei to suppress a rebellion in the Sultan's Sarawak territories. During that period Brooke developed ambitions of his own for Sarawak, and on 24 November 1841, through a combination of bluff and coercion (which included training the guns of *The Royalist* on the Sultan's palace in Brunei), the Sultan of Brunei agreed to appoint Brooke as Rajah of Sarawak. This established the 105-year reign of the Brooke family in Sarawak (Runciman 1960; Barclay 1980; Pringle 1970). Three Brooke Rajahs, James, Charles (James' nephew) and Vyner (Charles' son), ruled Sarawak from 1841 to 1946, excluding the period of Japanese occupation. During this time Sarawak was essentially a fiefdom of the Brooke family.

In this period Sarawak was recognised by the international community as an independent state. In 1888 a treaty was signed with the UK, giving the UK responsibility for foreign relations and defence, but ensuring that the Rajah retained internal sovereignty over Sarawak and absolute legal authority. This included an agreement that there would be no mechanism of appeal to the British legal system (Reece 1993:11).

In 1941 the Japanese invaded Sarawak. They occupied it until 1945 when Australian and British troops landed, shortly before the formal surrender of Japan. The Australian army administered Sarawak for several months in 1945 and 1946. In 1946 Vyner Brooke was briefly reinstated as Rajah while the future of postwar Sarawak was debated. Later the same year Sarawak was ceded to Britain and became a Crown colony, until 1963, when it joined as a member state of the Federation of Malaysia (Reece 1993). It remains such a member today.

In summary, Sarawak's unusual history, its ethnic and cultural mix and its extraordinary geographic and biological diversity make it unique among its neighbours. It will be shown in this thesis that the Sarawak tourism industry capitalises on these unique and distinguishing features, in particular in relation to organised tourism to Iban longhouses.

Iban social organisation and longhouses

Of all Borneo's non-Muslin indigenous people the Iban are almost certainly the most studied, at least by Western scholars. Over time this has meant that academic anthropological writing on Iban society has developed its own particular set of themes and fields of study. The most well-known is the debate surrounding Freeman's thesis that Iban longhouse society is classless and 'egalitarian'. In addition, the practice and role of Iban traditional healers or shaman (known as *manang*[6], and the former custom of headhunting have sustained academic and popular attention. As discussed in Chapter Three, in the 1990s Iban longhouse tourism also became a focus of study.[7] In the following section I draw mainly on the work of Sutlive (1978), Jensen (1974), Freeman (1992[8]), Sather (1993a; 1996) and Jawan (1993, 1994) to inform my discussion of Iban social organisation and the longhouse.[9]

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[6] The role of the *manang* in Iban society is to treat the sick. A *manang's* power derives from his ability to travel to the spirit world. Among the Iban many illnesses are perceived to be the result of one's spirit leaving their body and becoming trapped in the spirit world. M*anang* cure such illnesses by entering into a trance-like state and travelling to the spirit world, fighting off pernicious spirits and returning the wandering spirit of the sick person to their body (Jensen 1974:63, 141-150; Freeman 1979:235). There are numerous other special rites that *manang* perform and the history, role and context of *manang* in Iban society is extremely complex (see Jensen 1974; Harris 1998).

[7] On egalitarianism, see Rousseau (1980), Freeman (1981, 1992), Heppell (1975), King (1993b), Pringle (1970), (Jawan 1994:61) and Sather (1996). On shamanism and the *manang*, see Jensen (1974), Graham (1987), Pilz (1988), Winzler (1993), Sandin (1983), Barrett (1993), Sather (1993b) and Harris (1998, 2001). On headhunting, see Gomes (1911), Masing (1978) and Freeman (1979).

[8] Freeman's research was carried out in Sarawak between 1949 and 1951. His research was published in two serperate and slightly different publications in 1955: *Iban Agriculture: A Report on the Shifting Cultivation of Hill Rice by the Iban of Sarawak* was published by HMSO as part of the Colonial Research Studies series (Freeman 1955a) and *Report on the Iban of Sarawak* was published by the Sarawak Government Press (Freeman 19955b). Freeman's research became more widely known when Athlone Press published a revised version of *Iban Agriculture,* under the title *Report on the Iban* in 1970 (Freeman 1970). In 1992 a revised version of *Report on the Iban of Sarawak* (Freeman 1955b) was published by Abdul Majeed in Kuala Lumpur (Freeman 1992).

[9] The work of Benedict Sandin (1967, 1977, 1980), the former curator of the Sarawak Museum and an Iban himself, also stands out, as do numerous papers written by him in the *Sarawak Museum Journal* from the mid-1950s onwards. However, as Sandin's material focuses on Iban oral history and cosmology, the works noted above are more useful in the context of a broad overview of Iban culture and society. Peter Kedit and James Masing are two other respected Iban writers and I refer to their work in various sections in the thesis. However, their work also focuses on specific aspects of Iban culture and is therefore less useful for a general overview.

Iban society and the longhouse

An Iban longhouse is made up of several *bilik*-family apartments joined together. Both structurally and socially a longhouse is a combination of *bilik*-families that have chosen to reside side-by-side, forming a community (see Figure 1, following page).[10] A traditional Iban longhouse is both a building lived in by a community and a number of individual apartment buildings owned by resident families. In Iban, the term *bilik* describes both the family group and the apartment structure that each *bilik*-family maintains and that forms a section of the longhouse. Most anthropological writing uses the term '*bilik*-family' to distinguish the family grouping from the *bilik* architectural structure.[11]

The *bilik*-family is central to Iban longhouse society. Ideally, a *bilik*-family consists of three generations, including grandparents, a son or daughter and spouse and their children (Sather 1993a:65). In reality, many *bilik*-families do not mirror the ideal. For example, an unmarried sibling of one parent or grandparent may reside in the *bilik*. Adoption is also common. Recruitment to a *bilik*-family can occur in one of three ways: by birth, by adoption and by 'incorporation' (Jensen 1974:34; Freeman 1992:28).

Incorporation occurs when a person becomes a member of a *bilik*-family other than by birth or adoption. For example, an elderly person may be incorporated into a *bilik*-family if he or she has no living relatives and cannot support him or herself (Jensen 1974:25; Sutlive 1978:39-48).

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[10] The longhouse diagrams available in the anthropological literature did not match any of the longhouses I visited during fieldwork. Consequently, Figure 1 is an adapted version of Sather's (1993a) plan of a longhouse and more accurately illustrates the common longhouse design I encountered.

[11] The term *bilik*-family gained currency in anthropological writing after Freeman's work (Freeman, 1995a, 1955b, 1970, 1992) (see footnote 8).

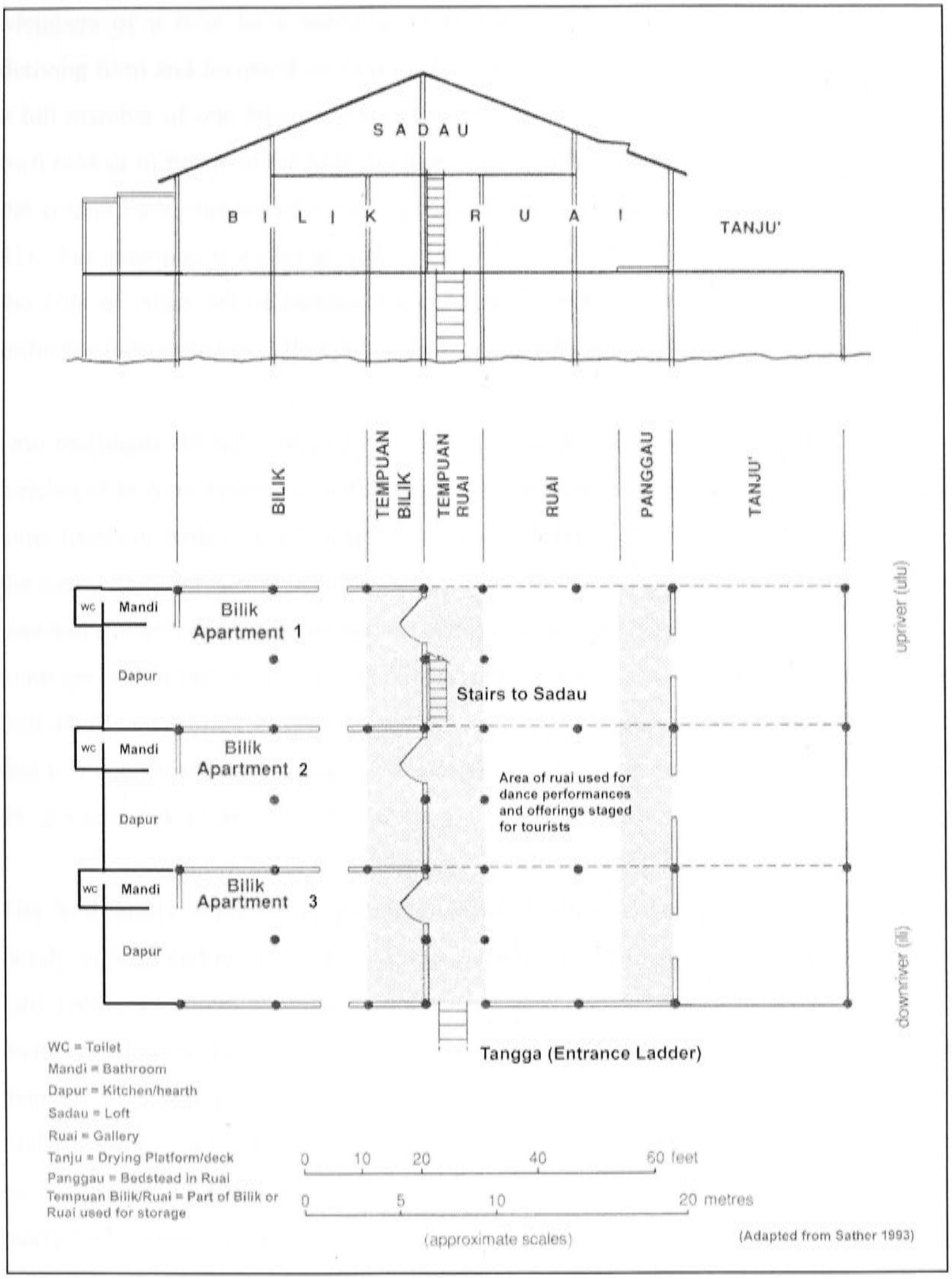

Figure 1: Section and plan adapted from Sather (1993a) to show the design of a typical 'older-style' wooden longhouse.

Members of a *bilik* have hereditary rights and economic and ritual responsibilities deriving from and focussed on their *bilik*, regardless of their sex. A person may only be a full member of one *bilik*. Upon marriage, an Iban couple can choose to set up their own *bilik* or to reside in the *bilik* of either set of parents. A choice is usually made after the couple have considered various practical and emotional issues (Freeman 1992:28-41). For example, if a sibling *bilik*-member and his or her spouse are already living in the *bilik* of either set of parents it may limit the options available to the couple and influence their decision. Often a new *bilik* is the preferred option.[12]

Iban marriages are not arranged, although it is common for individuals from the same longhouse or river system to marry and there is a preference for marriage to cousins and other (more distant) cognates (Jensen 1974:36-37; Freeman 1992:98-102). Members of the same *bilik*-family are forbidden from marrying each other. It is considered to be an incestuous union and a serious breach of customary law (*adat*).[13] As the tendency is for marriage within the community there is usually a high degree of interrelatedness among *bilik*-families within a longhouse and, in addition to shared customary law and ritual, this is a significant factor binding longhouse communities together (Freeman 1992:95-98; Jensen 1974:37-38; Sutlive 1978:44-45).

The *bilik*-family is the basic economic unit of a longhouse community and each *bilik*-family is responsible for its own economic welfare. The prime example is that each *bilik*-family owns and maintains a rice farm (*umai*) exclusively for the sustenance of its members (Jensen 1974:41; Freeman 1992:143). Most *bilik*-families also own and maintain their own cash crops, commonly a pepper garden (*kebun lada*) and a stand of rubber trees (*kebun getah*). *Bilik*-family members who remain resident in their natal *bilik* inherit the rice farm associated with that *bilik*. Any *bilik*-family members who marry and choose to leave their natal *bilik* relinquish rice farm property rights in that *bilik* and assume new rights related to the *bilik* into which they marry. Women and men

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[12] Sibling members of a *bilik* have full rights as co-heirs of the bilik's property. Upon marriage the situation can arise where more than one sibling and his or her spouse are resident in the natal *bilik*. Freeman notes that, frequently, tensions between the siblings' responsibilities to the *bilik* and to their spouses and children is the major cause for *bilik* partition. Upon partition the majority of *bilik* property is divided evenly between the siblings. Freeman defines this process as a major characteristic of Iban social organisation and longhouse society (Freeman 1992:47-60).

[13] See sections 144-146, *The Native Customary Laws Ordinance: The Adat Iban Order 29 May 1993, Sarawak Government Gazette Part II* (the Adat Iban Order).

have equal rights in all property, including land. In the past a rice farm was often established by felling virgin jungle, but in present-day Sarawak, because of land shortages, almost all rice farms are inherited (Freeman 1992:31-153; Jensen 1974:41-43; Masing 1988). The establishment of new longhouses (and, therefore, rice farms) in areas of virgin (or unused) jungle has, to my knowledge, almost completely ceased.[14]

In addition to a rice farm, most *bilik*-families own pigs and chickens, some fruit trees and a vegetable patch. The vegetable patch is often situated on a small plot of land (around three metres square) close to the rear of the *bilik* structure. Fruit trees are usually near or adjoining the rice farm. All crops and farm animals are privately owned and maintained by individual *bilik*-families for their own benefit (Freeman 1992:219).[15]

As the *bilik*-family is economically independent, there is little communal ownership of property in the longhouse.[16] Furthermore, in the past, community-wide labour initiatives for direct benefit to the whole longhouse community were rare (Freeman 1992:107-116).[17] However, in present-day Sarawak, longhouse-owned property and community-run economic endeavours are more common. For example, some longhouse communities jointly own and maintain a sizeable diesel generator for supplying electricity to every *bilik* in the longhouse. Similarly, organised longhouse tourism requires agreement between *bilik*-families that they will manage the longhouse as a business entity with joint responsibilities and goals.

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[14] Freeman notes that 'in certain parts of the second division...virgin forest has for some years been completely exhausted' and that (in 1949-1950 when he was conducting his fieldwork) the practice of longhouse communities re-establishing in new territory was not sustainable due to land shortages (Freeman 1992:58, 150-151, 292). Furthermore, since Western colonisation, the various governments that have ruled Sarawak have all pursued, either through military or social means, a policy of stabilising Iban migration (Freeman 1992:58, 130-152; King 1993b:157-160). See also Pringle (1970); Jawan (1994).

[15] Staple foodstuffs such as rice are rarely shared among *bilik*-families (except among those closely related by kinship). Instead, a *bilik*-family without sufficient rice will purchase rice, either from other *bilik*-families in the longhouse or from town. Despite this convention, certain limited reciprocal food sharing amongst *bilik* occurs on occasion, particularly with respect to game meat.

[16] Freeman cites as his only example the *tangga,* the carved wooden stepladder used as the common entrance to the longhouse structure, while Jensen adds the *repun*, a forge used for working on iron tools (Freeman 1992:107; Jensen 1974:41). The residents of Stamang longhouse (see Chapter Two) told me that the longhouse's cemetery (*pendam*) was communally owned. The *ruai* (gallery), while frequently used for communal purposes, is not communally owned.

[17] Freeman notes two exceptions: first, that constituent *bilik*-families in a longhouse coordinate and undertake together the firing of their individual rice farms to prevent fire spreading out of control. Secondly, the practice of tuba fishing, which requires the combined labour of several *bilik*-family to dam a river and to collect and prepare the necessary amount of tuba poison required to stun fish trapped in the dam (Freeman 1992:108-109).

Bilik-family members provide most of the day-to-day labour required to sustain a rice farm, as well as for routine domestic activities. There are no rigid customary laws stipulating division of labour between sexes, though there is an expectation that different sexes prefer and are better at certain kinds of work (Jensen 1974:44). For example, Iban women generally do the majority of cooking and cleaning for a *bilik*-family, as well as less strenuous farm work such as weeding and reaping. Men tend to do tasks requiring strenuous physical activity, such as building and maintaining a farm hut (*ngaga langkau*), threshing (*nungko*), carrying heavy sacks of rice back from the farm (*ngangkat padi*) and hunting (*ngasu*) (Freeman 1992:227-231). Another matter that affects the division of labour is the Iban custom of *bejalai* (literally 'to go on a journey' or 'to travel'), which is almost exclusively the domain of men. *Bejalai* is discussed further below.

In addition to *bilik*-family-focussed labour, a traditional system of reciprocal agricultural labour exchange (*bedurok*) is practiced between the constituent *bilik* of a longhouse community (Jensen 1974:50; Freeman 1992:234-240; Sutlive 1978:75; Jawan 1994:41,65). The system is only used during important stages of the rice farming cycle and the labour of men and women is valued equally. Freeman describes *bedurok* as:

> ...a traditional system whereby different *bilek-family* form co-operative work groups on a labour-exchange basis. These groups may operate during all or any of the four main stages of *padi* cultivation: felling, sowing, weeding, and reaping. The groups vary in size from about two to six *bilek-families*; and their formation is the outcome of personal negotiation between either the senior male members (i.e for felling and dibbling), or the senior female members (i.e for weeding and reaping) of the *bilek-families* concerned...Upon no *bilek-family*, however, is there any binding obligation to join any of these work groups, and it quite often happens that a household prefers to work alone (Freeman 1992:234).[18]

Freeman and Jensen note that wage payment (*gadji*) for agricultural and other types of labour occurs in longhouse communities. For example, Freeman explains that *bilik*-families with a surplus of *padi* (unhusked, unharvested rice) employ individuals from other *bilik* to help harvest their crop and increase production. Wages are paid using either cash or amounts of *padi*. Another example Freeman gives is of a man doing three days labour slashing undergrowth on a farm in return for having borrowed the use of a fighting cock and a bottle of kerosene for a ritual (Freeman 1992:238-239; Jensen

1974:45). At Mejong longhouse (a popular tourist longhouse I visited several times) one wealthy community member had previously engaged poorer residents in wage labour work to build him a freestanding house adjacent to the existing longhouse.

The longhouse as a social, jural and ritual community.

Despite the fact that *bilik*-families are economically discrete entities, longhouses and longhouse communities are more than a simple aggregation of *bilik*-families living independently side-by-side. Indeed, apart from economic self-sufficiency, Iban customary law, religion and social practice define a *bilik*-family as part of a longhouse (*rumah*) which, in turn, is understood as a community and a jural entity of ritual and spiritual significance (Freeman 1992:1-160; King 1993:197-205). This is a facet of the wider context of the animistic Iban religious belief system, which includes a pantheon of deities, a cosmology connecting a spirit world with that of the living and a highly specialised system of augury, as well as ritual songs, chants and offerings. Iban religion connects with daily life on matters as varied as managing rice fields, hunting, sickness, codes of social behaviour and customary law (Freeman 1992:117; King 1993b:233; Jensen 1974:55-70).[19]

Sather (1993a) uses the example of Iban rites associated with childbirth to demonstrate how longhouse custom defines an individual as a member both of a *bilik*-family and of a longhouse community. Sather's example is worth explaining in detail as it is an excellent illustration of the complexity of social, spatial and ritual relationships that are a regular part of longhouse life.

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[18] Freeman's spelling of '*bilek*' differs from the standard spelling '*bilik*', which is used in this thesis.

[19] In a number of the longhouse communities I visited during my fieldwork some residents had converted to Christianity and in some cases entire longhouse communities had done so. In casual conversation in Sarawak (including with longhouse residents and non-Iban) the common view was that progressively more longhouse communities were converting to Christianity and that traditional Iban religion was waning. The statistics on religious beliefs in Sarawak from the 2000 census provide an interesting perspective on this, even though a breakdown of religion by ethnic group is not provided. Of the total population of Sarawak only 5.2% identified as following a 'tribal/folk' religion, which includes Iban religion and also the religion of other Orang Ulu groups. The percentage of the population following other religions was: Christian 42.6%, Islam 31.3%, Buddhism 12.0%, 'Other traditional Chinese religions' 2.6%, Hindi 0.1%, 'other' 1.3%, 'unknown' 0.9% and no religion 3.9 % (www.statistics.gov.my). That only 5.2% of the population identified as practising tribal/folk religion yet 30.1% identified as Iban suggests that a significant number of Iban no longer practice Iban religion. Based on my experience, conversion to Islam is not favoured in Iban communities and Christianity is seen as a preferred alternative religious path.

Sather explains that, upon the birth of a child, Iban custom dictates that the child and its mother should be confined to the *bilik* for a period lasting between four and six weeks (Sather 1993a:84). During this time rituals are performed to ensure that the mother and child are both physically and spiritually healthy and the focus is on the child's relationship with its mother and other members of its *bilik*-family. When the period of confinement is over the mother is treated to a special ritual steam bath (to strengthen her body) and she then resumes normal longhouse life, which is signalled when she recommences bathing at the longhouse bathing space (*penai*) (Sather 1993a:85).

In contrast, the infant is required to undergo a series of separate rites that formally mark out its incorporation into the longhouse and the Iban social and spiritual world. For example, when the confinement period has passed, the child will be taken to the longhouse bathing space for a ritual first bathing (*meri anak mandi*), which is its first act as a community member (Sather 1993a:86). At dawn a special offering will have been made by the child's *bilik*-family at the section of the longhouse gallery (*ruai*) corresponding with its *bilik*. Furthermore, directly after the first bathing, the infant is taken by its *bilik*-family on a ritual procession through the longhouse. Following the procession the ceremony returns to the river where another offering is given at the bathing space and an invocation is spoken by a longhouse member that calls upon and introduces the infant to the guardian spirits that will protect it throughout its life. The *meri anak mandi* ceremony is concluded when the mother and child have undergone a further bathing ritual in the *ruai*, in which community members confirm the child's ritual and social integration into the community (Sather 1993a:87). As Sather notes, the movement from *bilik* to *ruai* to bathing space and back to *ruai* symbolises the way individuals are recognised and incorporated into a longhouse community - as a *bilik* member and a community member.

Another example used by Sather to illustrate the relationship of the *bilik*-family to the longhouse as a whole is that Iban *adat* defines the longhouse as the principal jural body for each longhouse community and sees every longhouse as situated within a territorial area (*menoa rumah*) covered by that longhouse's *adat* (Sather 1993a:68-70). Among different longhouse communities there are minor differences in *adat*, as well as more broadly between different riverine communities, such as Skrang River Iban and Batang

Ai River Iban. However, the salient features of *adat* Iban are shared across the wider Iban longhouse community and are also recognised by government statute.[20] Within the *menoa rumah* of every longhouse the rice farms (*umai*) and, usually, cash crops of each constituent *bilik*-family (although maintained by each *bilik*-family for its individual benefit) are subject to longhouse *adat,* which includes rites and fines that apply to the whole community. Furthermore, if a community member (or members) breaches *adat* the entire longhouse is considered to be affected, becoming 'hot' (*angat*), a state in which the community is likely to suffer general misfortune, particularly sickness and crop failure. To restore the longhouse to a 'cool' (*celap*), balanced state, the offending person (or persons) is required to pay a fine, usually to the person in the community who was directly affected by his or her actions (Jensen 1974:113-115; King 1993b:205).

Sather provides an excellent summary of the significance, for individual *bilik*-family members, of the longhouse, understood as a social, ritual and material whole:

> Ritual brings into play, at different times, each of the major structural levels represented in the ritual and physical constitution of the longhouse. Thus the Iban divide the greater part of their ritual activity into three major categories: *bedara', gawa',* and *gawai*...The *bedara'* are essentially *bilik*-family rites, small thanksgiving or propitiation rituals held, for example, to nullify ill omens or acknowledge spiritual favours. The Iban distinguish between*bedara' mata* (unripe bedara') and *bedara' mansau* (ripe *bedara'*). The first are held inside the family apartment [*bilik*], the second on the longhouse gallery [*ruai*]. The movement from apartment to gallery marks an increase in the seriousness of the ritual and a shift in its social focus from the family as a separate entity to the family as part of the longhouse community. The*gawa'* are essentially longhouse rituals of intermediate complexity, while the*gawai* are major bardic rites, witnessed by guests drawn from the larger river region, including the community's *sapemakai* (co-feasting allies). Both are performed in the gallery.
>
> The distinction between these three broad classes of ritual reflects not only social structure but also the processes by which each individual is incorporated into the social and ritual order itself...This process of incorporation and the movement of the individual through the social and ritual order are marked by transformations in the ritual organisation of the longhouse itself, the attribution of alternative meanings to its spatial and architectural features (Sather 1993a:83-84).

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[20] The Adat Iban Order has codified a large proportion of *adat* Iban and recognised it within Sarawak state law, including *adat* laws relating to marriage, compensation for divorce, child support, land tenure, land tenure disputes and breaches of *adat* in relation to Iban religion. Consequently, these areas of *adat* are more or less standardised in practice, as they are in law, across all Iban areas of Sarawak (pers.comm.Pengulu Rentap). However, there is variation among longhouse communities and between the major Iban riverine communities on *adat* matters not prescribed in the ordinance. One example that I encountered was *adat* in relation to whether residents could eat macaque, which varied from longhouse to longhouse on the Skrang and Batang Ai Rivers. Furthermore, *adat* is a continuing and evolving customary law and develops on a macro level (among the wider Iban community) and a micro level (within each longhouse community) in response to social and cultural change (Pringle 1970:174-175). An example, which I discuss in Chapter Seven, is that some tourist longhouse communities have adapted local *adat* relating to mourning rites in order to facilitate the smooth running of tours (although the change has not been without problems).

As Sather explains, the dynamic between individual, *bilik*-family and longhouse is fundamental to understanding the social processes of longhouse life and the character of longhouses, as both structure and community. Helliwell describes a similar phenomenon for the Gerai of Indonesian West Borneo, characterising their longhouse as a 'community of voices' (Helliwell 1993:51). Helliwell emphasises that longhouse life sees residents embedded in coterminous economic, spiritual and social processes that define them variously as individual, apartment member and community member (Helliwell 1993:58-59). In addition, Helliwell stresses that longhouses should be viewed as social and structural entities, interconnecting both widthwise and lengthwise. Summarising her views on the relationship between family-apartments (she refers to them as households) in a longhouse and the wider longhouse community, Helliwell states:

> For the Dayaks of Gerai, as for most Dayak groups, household autonomy is a central cultural value, and there is no doubt that in Gerai (as elsewhere) certain features of longhouse structure are linked to this fact. Yet, examination of the spatial arrangements within the Gerai household does not support a view of the Gerai household as an isolated and inward-turning entity. Rather, it indicates its embeddedness in the larger longhouse community of which it is part. Emphasis on the apartment's orientation widthwise as part of a single longhouse structure should not be taken as a denial of its lengthwise identity as a separate unit within that structure. The apartment is both of these at the same time, just as its member household is both autonomous and yet highly dependent on the longhouse community neighbours (Helliwell 1993:58).

Tuai Rumah

All Iban longhouse communities have an elected headperson called the '*Tuai Rumah*', a title meaning literally 'house elder'. According to Iban customary law the *Tuai Rumah* is selected by consensus from among the constituent *bilik*-families of a longhouse. The *Tuai Rumah* can be any adult male or female member of the longhouse community, although male *Tuai Rumah* are the norm (Freeman 1992:109-116; Jensen 1974:26; King 1993b:204; Jawan 1994:46-49). It is common for the *Tuai Rumah* to be successively chosen from the same *bilik*-family and he is often the son of the incumbent.[21]

The role of the *Tuai Rumah* is to provide leadership in the community and to maintain its correct social and ritual balance. This involves acting as an arbiter during

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[21] This aspect of Iban customary law has been at the centre of much of the anthropological debate surrounding the issue of Iban egalitarianism.

community disputes and when *adat* is violated, as well as recommending (if required) the correct customary fine. For example, if a couple from a longhouse community wishes to divorce the *Tuai Rumah* will chair a community meeting during which the couple and other interested persons (most of the community usually) debate issues associated with the divorce, such as child maintenance and the correct customary fines payable to ensure the spiritual balance of the longhouse. As noted previously, Iban customary law is recognised under Sarawak State law and, although the *Tuai Rumah* is acknowledged as the leader and spokesperson for his or her community by that law, it is the *Pengulu* (head of the river or river leader) who is responsible for much of the paperwork that transfers decisions of customary law into Malaysian civil law.[22]

The *Tuai Rumah* is also the interface between the community and the wider world. When visitors who are not known to the community or who are unexpected (such as independent travellers or government officers) arrive at a longhouse the *Tuai Rumah* welcomes them (usually by offering a glass of rice wine) and ascertains the purpose of their visit and any course of action to be taken in relation to it (Jawan 1994:46-49). In longhouse communities involved with organised tourism the *Tuai Rumah* is usually the community's spokesperson and the signatory to any formal agreements made between the community and the tour company (or companies).

Although suggestions or opinions offered by a *Tuai Rumah* tend to be authoritative and are frequently acted upon by community members without challenge[23] (Freeman 1992:109-116; Jawan 1994:46-49), the longhouse community is not obliged to follow the *Tuai Rumah*'s advice and he or she has no authority to issue orders to any individual or to the community. A *Tuai Rumah* only maintains his or her position by retaining the respect and support of the community. In fact, the *Tuai Rumah* only has status as the elected headperson of the constituent *bilik*-families whose representatives meet with him to discuss and agree on major matters.

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[22] For examples see the Adat Iban Order page iv, section 198 and pages 62-65.
[23] For an example see Chapter Two.

Pengulu

In the areas of Sarawak largely populated by Iban longhouse communities each river or river valley system, (and associated terrain) has a '*Pengulu*'. In Iban *Pengulu* is literally 'one who leads' and the office is perhaps most suitably described as 'head of the river' or 'river chief'. Prior to the establishment of Brooke rule in Sarawak the office of *Pengulu* did not exist (although there were locally recognised leaders, usually war leaders, called *Tau Serang*) and, as Freeman notes, 'Iban society had no system of centralised political authority' (Freeman 1992:65). The office of *Pengulu* was established during the Brooke period to facilitate the administration of Iban districts by officially recognising and empowering regional leaders (Jensen 1974:23; King 1993b:203; Pringle 1970:33, 157; Sutlive 1978:144-146).

A *Pengulu* is appointed by local election (every five years) and presides over a constituency of the longhouses of one river system (usually between 15 and 25 longhouses) (see Freeman 1992; Jensen 1974 and pers.comm. Pengulu Rentap).[24] Like the position of *Tuai Rumah*, any adult member of a longhouse community may become a *Pengulu*, although it is usual for the position to remain within certain *bilik*-families and longhouses (Jawan 1994:49-53).[25]

Under the Adat Iban Order *Pengulu* are recognised as the next level above a *Tuai Rumah* in *adat* matters and they receive a small salary. A *Pengulu* oversees any appeals against the decision of a *Tuai Rumah* within his constituency (pers.comm.Pengulu Rentap). Furthermore, the *Pengulu* of a particular district is usually highly sought after as an arbiter and adviser, on matters ranging from domestic disputes to negotiations between longhouse communities and logging companies and, in my experience on the Skrang, Engkari and Lemanak Rivers, negotiations between longhouse tour companies and longhouse communities.

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[24] Pengulu Rentap advised me that he was *Pengulu* for 16 longhouses incorporating approximately 3000 people.

[25] It is my understanding that there is no customary or state law that prevents a woman from becoming a *Pengulu*, although I have never come across any female *Pengulu*.

Like a *Tuai Rumah*, a *Pengulu* cannot give orders to any individual or longhouse, although it is generally recognised that the higher status of the office gives more force to any suggestions or advice he may offer.

Bejalai

A final, distinctive feature of Iban longhouse society that requires brief discussion is the Iban custom of *bejalai*, It is a custom that shares some similarities with Western tourism and travel for leisure (theoretical discussion of tourism is provided in Chapter Three).

Bejalai is primarily practised by Iban men who are not married or who have married but have not yet assumed major responsibility for their *bilik*-family's rice farm.[26] It usually involves a young man leaving his longhouse and travelling in search of paid work and adventure (Jensen 1974:52; Mashman 1991:255-257). Iban men may go on *bejalai* for a period ranging from several months to several years, although married men with children tend to go for shorter periods.

Kedit (1993) has summarised the custom of *bejalai* as 'to go on journeys with the view of acquiring wealth, material goods and social prestige (Kedit 1993:Figure 1) and has described the 'ideal *bejalai*' as a young unmarried man who leaves the longhouse for a short period or is away for longer but regularly sends money home and returns with prestige goods and cash (Kedit 1993:85). This stands in contrast to older men on *bejalai* who are perceived to be avoiding family responsibilities if they leave their families behind for extended periods or do not remit money home (Kedit 1993:85). In contemporary Sarawak Iban men primarily go on *bejalai* to acquire cash and prestigious, useful consumer goods, such as chainsaws, generators, outboard motors,

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[26] *Bejalai* amongst women is rare as it is considered inappropriate for young girls to travel on their own. When I discussed *bejalai* with longhouse residents a common statement was that women who went on *bejalai* ended up working as prostitutes, although it was unclear whether such stories were true or simply gossip. Kedit notes a similar attitude towards female *bejalai* in a 1991 paper (Kedit 1991:297).

furniture and clothing, which could not readily be purchased with income from cash crops.[27]

While on *bejalai* it is common for Iban men to visit and stay in other longhouse communities. This may be in the course of travelling to or returning from a work site or may be simply to visit friends or relatives and enjoy the atmosphere of other longhouses.[28] It is customary for longhouse communities to host men in transit on *bejalai* and this is linked to a tradition of providing hospitality to travellers.

Like Western tourists who travel for leisure and adventure *bejalai*-returnees gain social prestige from their travels. As Kedit notes:

> An unexpressed, but nevertheless very important motive for *bejalai* is to gain social prestige. A man who succeeds in his endeavour enhances the standing of the *bilek*-family, not only in the eyes of his long-house community but throughout the river system…Nothing thrills the son more than to be surrounded by kinsmen and friends on the *ruai* listening to his news and stories of his *bejalai*…A common sight is the *bejalai*-returnee seated on the important section of the *ruai*, facing his admiring audience and telling of his adventures: of the risks he took on the oil-rigs; or the times he has drinking sessions with his mates; on the thrills and delights the towns offer (Kedit 1993:86).

Similarly, Freeman notes that for young Iban men the chance to travel and acquire social prestige and valuable property is 'an overruling passion' (Freeman 1992:24-25). A significant part of the 'social prestige' that men seek from *bejalai* is to be recognised as widely travelled and worldly. In this sense *bejalai* shares similarities with a widespread view in the West that travel is a chance to broaden one's horizons and return home with wider knowledge and experience. However, there are clear differences between *bejalai* and mainstream Western tourism (including longhouse tours). Western tourists are generally travelling for leisure and without any expectation that they should

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[27] While a man is on *bejalai* other members of his *bilik*-family, usually women, take up the shortfall in labour that arises from his absence. A *bilik*-family may suffer hardship while a man is away on *bejalai*, especially if he is the primary source of male labour. This is a factor in the expectation that a man should return from *bejalai* with useful consumer goods and cash (Mashman 1991:255-258; Kedit 1991). Mashman notes that there is a tendency for men on *bejalai* to purchase goods that are more useful and prestigious for themselves rather than women. For example, guns and outboard motors are popular purchases (Mashman 1991:257)

[28] Another feature of *bejalai* is that it is it only while on *bejalai* that Iban men can obtain traditional motif tattoos. Consequently, the elaborate tattoos that many older Iban men sport (and which are highlighted in much Sarawak travel and longhouse tour marketing material) indicate the wearer is well-travelled and knowledgeable (Freeman 1992:223). Furthermore, an accepted anthropological interpretation of the social function of *bejalai* is that it has

return from their travels with earnings and valuable consumer goods. Furthermore, while the purpose of *bejalai* is relatively clearly defined and understood amongst Iban, there are varied motivations and purposes of tourism and travel in the West. I return to discussion of *bejalai* in later chapters.

Longhouse architecture and ownership: traditional and modern

In the chapters that follow Iban longhouses are discussed in terms of their architectural characteristics, particularly in relation to the way the longhouse tourism industry values and promotes longhouses as architectural entities and the difficulties faced by longhouse tour companies and longhouse communities in maintaining an architecturally appropriate tourist longhouse in the context of the movement towards modernisation and development evident across Iban longhouse communities. Accordingly, it is necessary here to provide an explanation of traditional longhouse architecture as it relates to Iban longhouse social organisation and to provide introductory comment on contemporary Iban longhouse architecture in Sarawak.

Longhouse architecture has changed considerably in the last 30 years, largely due to the increasing wealth of communities, growing sedentariness and the availability of modern building materials such as cement, concrete, bricks and corrugated iron (Winzler 1998).[29] Furthermore, while modernisation and development in the period since World War II has undoubtedly seen the most rapid and dramatic change in longhouse architecture, change was occurring in response to outside influence throughout the

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replaced headhunting as a rite of passage for young men (Jensen 1974; Freeman 1992:226; Mashman 1991:255-256, 258).

[29] In the past, Iban often migrated in search of virgin jungle that they then cleared and on which they established a new longhouse community. In addition to fleeing conflict the prime reason for migration was because newly-cleared land provided increased crop yields, as well as a greater abundance of jungle resources. Sometimes an entire longhouse community would move to a new area, while at other times several *bilik*-families wishing to establish a new longhouse would do so. Furthermore, new territory was acquired through warfare with other indigenous groups competing for access to land, such as the Kayan and other Iban groups. From the second half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century Iban areas gradually came under the control of external government. This fact, combined with increasing competition for land due to an expanding population (including non-Iban migrants), land clearing and different land uses (such as plantations), effectively brought migration to new areas to an end by the later half of the twentieth century (Freeman 1992:58; 75-78, 131-151; King 1993b:158-159). For a history of Iban migration and settlement patterns before Brooke rule see Sandin (1967) and for a history during Brooke rule see Pringle (1970).

twentieth century. For example, Pringle notes the following changes in Saribas District longhouse architecture after World War I:

> ...especially on the Paku tributary [in the Saribas District], many Ibans became prosperous rubber smallholders and in the period after World War I began to build more permanent longhouses, sometimes incorporating machine-milled planking, glass windows and Western-style staircases (Pringle 1970:30).

In contemporary Sarawak modern Iban longhouses have continued the basic design of older longhouses and still consist of a series of *bilik* built side-by-side. However, there are important differences. Notably, older-style longhouses are largely constructed from wood, while newer longhouses are usually built using a combination of river stone, brick, cement, tin or corrugated iron and concrete. In addition, traditional-style, wooden longhouses require a great deal of maintenance and are likely to need to be completely rebuilt about every 30 years.[30]

The choice to continue with the longhouse form of domicile is not necessarily followed across all Iban communities in Sarawak and Iban are adapting their social and architectural environment to the developing world in numerous ways (Jawan 1994:72-75). For example, in 1996 at Serubah longhouse on the Lemanak River some families had built freestanding houses (similar to Malay, kampong-style housing) near the longhouse instead of building additional *bilik*. In addition, I observed a community near the Lubok Antu Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (SALCRA) palm oil plantation that had built a number of freestanding houses instead of additional *bilik*, with the result that the longhouse had become the central feature amongst a small hamlet of houses.

Iban longhouses are usually built alongside a river on poles or posts raised above the ground. In recent years, longhouses built near roads have become more common.[31] The height which a longhouse is raised from the ground varies and can be anything from about five feet (more or less a series of wooden stumps) to over 20 feet (a house built on

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[30] This is an average figure gleaned from discussions with residents in several longhouses. The time span for rebuilding can vary from several decades to less than a decade. There is an increasing trend towards longer intervals because of the availability of better-quality building materials and other factors such as that there is less land on which to build new longhouses (Winzler 1998:2).

stilts). With modern longhouses, poles or stilts are often abandoned in favour of a concrete slab poured directly onto the ground with the longhouse structure placed on top.

Viewed from the outside, a longhouse has the appearance of being one long communal dwelling. However, a traditional longhouse is, in fact, comprised of a number of *bilik*-family apartments joined together, with each forming a cross-section of the breadth of the longhouse (see Figures 1 and 2) and with individual variations in construction material and design as a result of the tradition of construction and ownership by individual *bilik*-families.

Figure 2: Left, interior of modern longhouse on the Batang Rajang River near the town of Song. Image shows residents entertaining a visitor in the *ruai* (on the left can be seen the open door to a *bilik*). Right top, the river-facing exterior of a longhouse near Song showing the *tanju* and external wall with doorways leading to *ruai*. Right bottom, a cross-section of a longhouse under construction near the town of Pakan.

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[31] For example, there are several large, modern longhouses adjacent to the Pan Borneo Highway between the towns of Serian and Sri Aman (which is the route travelled by the mini vans carrying tourists on their way to stay in tourist longhouses).

Across each *bilik* section of the longhouse is a dividing wall (usually built in line with the central point of the roof) with a door opening onto the *ruai* (gallery). That wall separates a *bilik*-family's sleeping and personal quarters from the *ruai* that fronts the *bilik* and runs the length of the longhouse.[32] Between each *bilik* there are common walls that serve to section off *bilik*-apartments from each other. Often, in older longhouses, the walls have a small door or hatch allowing direct access between the *bilik* (Sutlive 1978:50-56). In newer longhouses such doors and hatches are less common. The walled apartment section of a *bilik* is the space where residents cook, eat, sleep and carry out domestic activities not otherwise undertaken in the *ruai*. Structurally, the privately-owned *bilik* have the appearance of being sectioned off 'private' spaces separate from the more open 'public' space of the *ruai*, although the system of private ownership and responsibility continues with the *ruai* which is for *bilik*-family and communal use.[33]

As a communal space the *ruai* is a roofed thoroughfare allowing access to the *bilik* and it is also a space where festivals and rituals of longhouse-wide significance are held. But the section of the *ruai* that abuts each *bilik* is built and maintained by that *bilik*-family. *Bilik* members use the section of the *ruai* in front of their apartment (usually the part closest to the lengthways peripheral wall of the longhouse or *panggau*) for daily family activities that can be undertaken in public view. In fact, there is an expectation that some daily practices will be performed in the *ruai*, such as men repairing their fishing nets and women weaving baskets and mats. In addition, the section of the *ruai* abutting the *Tuai Rumah*'s *bilik* is where guests and official visitors to the longhouse are usually received. Overall, the *ruai* is the social and ritual hub of a longhouse and as a lived space it encapsulates a good deal of what longhouse life is about. Freeman provides an eloquent summary of its significance:

> It [the *ruai*] has indeed something of the atmosphere of a boulevard. At nightfall, when lamps are gleaming up and down its length, strolling men gather in casual groups to sit and smoke, chew betel, and discuss together the happenings of the day. And the evening meal over, a score or more may assemble - the women with their weaving - to listen to some visitor chant one of the traditional sagas (*ensera*), telling of the miraculous feats of Iban culture heroes and demi-gods, like Kling and Bungai Nuing. On the *ruai* something is always happening; it is the place where

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[32] Most interior walls in older-style Iban longhouses are built from wood, although synthetic and chipboard cladding is now common.

[33] This is also the case for the *tanju*, referred to later in the chapter.

> guests are welcomed and disputes settled. It is the place where shrines are set up and elaborate rituals enacted; it is the public stage for a multitude of tasks from the most mundane to the most sacrosanct. The *ruai* of a longhouse has always some excitement or interest to offer, and Iban men say that on their travels it is the animated and convivial atmosphere of the *ruai* which they most miss (Freeman 1992:125-126).

Outside the front wall of the longhouse facing the river is the *tanju*. The *tanju* is primarily used for drying rice, pepper and clothes. The *tanju*, like the *ruai*, is maintained by the *bilik* members, and forms part of each *bilik*, both as an architectural and a social unit. In older-style longhouses the *tanju* is a significant architectural feature. It is raised on stilts (to the same level as the rest of the longhouse) and forms a long deck or uncovered verandah running the span of the longhouse. In modern-style longhouses the *tanju* is usually a concrete or cement slab running alongside the front of the building or, alternatively, consists of river stone paving or wooden planks laid flat on the ground. The *tanju*, because it is an outside and uncovered space, is not as frequently the focus for ritual activities as the *ruai*, although a notable exception is the whetstone festival or *Gawai Batu* (Sutlive 1978:66-70).

Situated above each *bilik* and its section of the *ruai*, and reaching from the lower internal ceiling to the pitched roof above, is the *sadau* section of the longhouse (see Figure 1 and the left hand image in Figure 2). The *sadau* is the loft of each *bilik* and is used mainly for storage of rice, baskets, mats and other household items. In older-style longhouses access to the *sadau* area is usually via a permanent or removable notched log ladder positioned alongside the *bilik/ruai* dividing wall (on the *ruai* side). In my observation, in newer longhouses access to the *sadau* area is generally through a ladder or staircase situated inside the *bilik*-apartment.

Another important feature of Iban longhouses is the hearth or cooking place (*dapur*). It is my understanding that, before changes to the traditional architecture of longhouses became more common, the *dapur* was situated inside the *bilik*-apartment against the dividing wall between *bilik* and *ruai* (see Jensen 1974; Freeman 1992; Sather 1993a). However, it was not in this location in any of the longhouses I visited. In my experience, the *dapur* was situated either against the rear wall of the *bilik* (the back wall of the *bilik* and longhouse) or in a small, separate, lean-to-style structure opening onto and attached to the rear of the *bilik*. In addition, in my experience, some of these *dapur*

structures included a separate structure attached to the side and used for bathing (*mandi*) and another rudimentary structure attached at the back functioning as a toilet (generally made from corrugated iron or old timber).

Roofing is an important architectural feature of Iban longhouses. Each *bilik*-family in a longhouse is responsible for constructing and maintaining its own roof (and the rest of the *bilik* structure). The prominent elongated roof that is a feature of longhouses (and frequently depicted in Sarawak tourism marketing) is, in fact, the joined roofs of individual *bilik*. Furthermore, because economic circumstances differ between the *bilik*-families that make up a longhouse, there is often a noticeable variation in the style and quality of a longhouse roof.

Most longhouses in Sarawak are now roofed with corrugated iron or other types of pressed metal roofing material. Before modern materials were available hardwood shingles (*atap belian*) were the preferred roofing material, although poorer families often used thatch made from leaves (*atap daun*). In my experience, very few longhouses in Sarawak retain older-style roofing, despite the fact that it still features prominently in longhouse tour marketing. In newly-built longhouses *bilik*-families occasionally pool their finances to buy better quality roofing material and roof the longhouse as one structure, although each *bilik*-family is always responsible for individually financing the construction and maintenance of its own *bilik*. In addition, some longhouse communities have received government funding to roof the entire longhouse as one structure (King 1993b:218-223).

Iban culture and development culture: Malaysia's Vision 2020

The discussion above has focussed on the significant features of Iban longhouse society necessary to understand its uniqueness and provide the context for analysis of the mode of operation of the longhouse tour industry, the product being offered and how longhouse communities manage the longhouse product. The focus in this section is on providing an alternative perspective on Iban longhouse culture as it is perceived in the context of Malaysia's national rhetoric on modernisation and development. In later

chapters this perspective is examined in relation to some of the difficulties faced by longhouse tour companies and tourist longhouse communities about the nature and future of the industry.

Development rhetoric in Malaysia is encapsulated in the policy vision for Malaysia's future of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and in *Wawasan* 2020 (Vision 2020), the slogan for the long-term, nationwide strategy for Malaysia to become a fully 'developed' and modern 'first world' country by the year 2020. Media references to Vision 2020 and the five-year 'Malaysia Plans' that provide the strategic policy framework for this goal are ubiquitous in Malaysia. Stories are published daily in the nation's newspapers that generally speak uncritically of development goals planned or achieved, new initiatives implemented and the nation's progress towards Vision 2020. Whether such articles can be called 'news' is debatable, as typically the content resembles propaganda more than factual reporting.[34] The electronic media is similar, and government commercials are broadcast nightly to the nation's TV viewers proclaiming 'Malaysia is able' (*Malaysia Boleh*), reinforcing the message that Vision 2020, along with a host of development goals, 'can' be reached. Current affairs programming is another medium for messages about development. Many such programs broadcast an unquestioning journalism that acquiesces to favourable reviews of government development projects and private enterprise business initiatives considered good for development.[35] While I was in Sarawak two other methods used to remind the populace of the nation's 'Vision 2020' were billboards placed next to freeways and in the centre of small towns, and murals on the walls of school, military barracks and government buildings.[36]

Awareness of Vision 2020 and the development aspirations of the Malaysian Government is high among longhouse residents and it is reasonable to assert that this is

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[34] My comment here relies largely on English-language newspapers, and some articles from Malay language newspapers that friends assisted with me reading. I am unaware of the how Chinese language newspapers cover these issues.

[35] I refer here to English language broadcasts and broadcasts in Malay that I was able to discuss with longhouse residents.

[36] The style of these billboards and murals could be described as 'socialist realism' similar to the murals common in the former Soviet Union, contemporary Vietnam, or Indonesia.

the case with a large proportion of the Malaysian population.[37] As Amri Baharuddin Shamsul (1992) has commented, the government's promotional strategy has been highly successful in cementing Vision 2020 in the national psyche:

> Wawasan 2020, or Vision 2020, has become a household word in Malaysia today. It has achieved a magical mantra status in present day Malaysian social life since the idea was first introduced by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's Prime Minister...whatever the origin of the term Vision 2020, since that day in February 1991, this term has been used daily, in speeches of Ministers, in daily conversations of the public, and in both the print and electronic media in Malaysia (Amri Baharuddin Shamsul 1992:2).[38]

Although Amri Baharuddin Shamsul's comments were written in 1992 his observations are even more relevant today, as Vision 2020 has remained at the forefront of Malaysian government pro-development rhetoric throughout the 1990s and into the present.[39] The five-yearly 'Malaysia Plans' that began in 1956 (one year prior to independence), and that continue as policy framework today, are promoted throughout Malaysia. In 1996 when the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996 – 2000) was launched, *The New Straits Times* included an eight-page colour supplement provided by the Federal Government including an introduction by Dr Mahathir Mohamad in which he called for Malaysia to 'head firmly and confidently towards 2020 and the years beyond'.

On balance it would appear that the Malaysia Plans, as a policy framework intended to stimulate development and modernisation (amongst other things), have been successful in conservative socio-economic terms; sustained economic growth and steadily increasing prosperity amongst differing sectors (although not all) of the population have been characteristics of Malaysia since independence, a fact generally recognised by the global community. There have been a number of shifts in the social and economic policies encapsulated within these plans, such as the move to down-size government and privatise industries and services that were formally government-run. However, the core principle of top-down, government-implemented, national development planning

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[37] Based on my own observations, this would appear to be the case, at least in Sarawak. The words the Iban use for development are the Iban word '*pemansang*', meaning literally to 'move forward', and the Malaysian term '*pembangunan*', meaning literally to 'build up'. In the Iban longhouses I frequented residents frequently used these terms when discussing their aspirations for the future (the English word 'development' was also sometimes used).

[38] Amri Baharuddin Shamsul suggests that 'Vision 2020' was first coined by the Malaysian media to describe the 'gist' of a working paper presented by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to the inaugural meeting of the Malaysian Business Council on 28 February 1991.

[39] A good example of the continuing prominence and significance of vision 2020 is the Wawasan 2020 web page www.wawasan2020.com.

has remained in place and has been mirrored at the state level with Sarawak Government development planning (King 1999a:49-60; Cleary and Eaton 1992:244).

The ideology of development that permeates contemporary Malaysian society carries the message that there are certain Malaysian people or groups of people (as well as various economic sectors) who are in special need of assistance because they are 'backward' and 'underdeveloped'. For example, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad made this observation (with the added qualifier that these Malaysians may be identified by their 'race' and 'ethnic group'[40]) when he outlined his broad strategy for Vision 2020 in his 1991 working paper *Malaysia: The Way Forward*:

> A developed Malaysia should not have a society in which economic backwardness is identified with race...We must aspire by the year 2020 to reach a stage where no-one can say that a particular ethnic group is inherently economically backward and another is inherently economically advanced (Mahathir Mohamad 1991:3).

In 1996 he made a similar point in an attack on opposition to resource-based development in Sarawak by non-government organisations (NGOs) operating in the West:

> Western NGOs want Malaysians, particularly the natives, to live in the jungle and preserve their cultures. They want us to be deprived of every development which could uplift our standards of living. They want us to be no different from animals. But now it is time for us to develop ourselves...and culture has to undergo some changes if it is to give way to progress...The natives should not stay in the jungle in the huts to preserve their ancestral cultures as it would prevent them from seeking better lives (Borneo Post, 8 November 1996 in King and Parnwell 1999:167).

In the example above Dr Mahathir Mohamad aims the force of his rhetoric at Western NGOs and criticises an assumed view that they want Malaysia's 'natives' to be kept as 'preserved ancestral cultures' 'living in the 'jungle'. As this thesis will show, longhouse tourism markets the Iban as a version of the 'preserved ancestral cultures' of which Dr Mahathir Mohamad speaks, primarily to the Western tourist market. However, Dr Mahathir Mohamad's comments suggest that he sees 'jungle' living as a retrograde lifestyle, little different from that of animals. Dr Mahathir Mohamad's remarks foreshadow problems with the focus of the longhouse product in the context of a national discourse of and vision for development.

As Dr Mahathir Mohamad's comments indicate, Malaysia's development policy and Vision 2020 rest on a basic dichotomy of 'traditional' versus 'modern' societies. The importance of the nationwide Malaysian discourse of development cannot be overstressed, and includes much public and private debate. As King notes (quoting another writer, Mohammed Halib) the basis of development planning in Malaysia from the 1970s has relied on:

> ...the notion of a diffusionary mechanism to impart technology and capital along with the values of capitalism, the work ethic and the need for achievement to tradition-bound Malay peasants and Dayak Farmers... Thus, 'traditional technologies...have virtually no place in the framework. The presence of "traditional" values and attitudes serves only as a hindrance to modernization and development' (King 1999a:58)

Another example can be seen in a 1996 *Sarawak Sunday Tribune* article entitled 'Striking a Balance Between Culture and Development'. The writer echoes Dr Mahathir Mohamad's comments and identifies the characteristics of the ethnic groups in Malaysian society that he or she perceives as being backward:

> Modernisation, it is self explanatory – something to do with acquiring modern education, being involved in the modern economy of science and technology and new methods, applications and ideas. Like many of us Malaysians in the urban areas with education and surviving and living in the urban setting – that is part of modernisation (as opposed to that if we are still living in the jungles without education and doing shifting cultivation)...we must discard all the negative aspects of our old ways and styles (for example excessive drinking of liquor and reluctance to adopt new ways and challenges) (*Sarawak Sunday Tribune* 4 June 1996).

Urbanisation, modern education and discarding 'old ways and styles' are put forward as an appropriate and desirable outcome of development.[41] 'Living in the jungle', 'practising shifting cultivation' and 'drinking' are defined as the characteristics of backward people.[42] In the Sarawak context the implication is that the traditional way of life of Sarawak's non-Muslim Indigenous people is backward. The reference to shifting cultivation is significant because as noted above the cycle of shifting hill rice cultivation is central to traditional Iban beliefs as well as other longhouse dwelling groups in Sarawak.[43] Furthermore, the article suggests that failure to develop amongst these groups is due to an inherent cultural conservatism and inertia. Finally, by making

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[40] In the passage quoted Dr Mahathir Mohamad was referring to some sectors of the Malay population.

[41] See Cleary and Eaton (1992) for a summary of the development policies of Malaysia and other Borneo states in relation to the agricultural and social practices of Borneo's non-Muslim indigenous people.

[42] King and Parnwell (1999) note a challenge to this view in a study by Saccheri and Walker (1992) in which the authors argue that the burning practices that are a key part of indigenous shifting cultivation practices in Borneo are beneficial to agricultural productivity and local environment (King and Parnwell 1999:13).

'shifting cultivation' and 'living in the jungle' identifiers for those who are not modern the writer is effectively excluding Malays and Chinese, because neither of these ethnic groups generally practise shifting cultivation. The comment about 'excessive drinking of liquor' implies that the group in question is not Malay or Muslim. In other words, although the article refrains from explicit identification, for the Sarawak reader it is clear that it is indigenous groups (including the Iban) who need to develop.[44]

Although the above article is in English, which means that a large proportion of longhouse residents would be unlikely to have read it, it is representative of a great deal of Malaysian public comment about development that characterises indigenous groups generally, and the Iban and their way of life in particular, as marked by backwardness. Such views are not without a wider local context. For example, in my observation, some Muslim Malays hold the view that the Iban are unclean and drunkards. There is also a long history of the Iban, and Sarawak's other non-Muslim, indigenous peoples, being understood as a barbaric people of Borneo's interior (see Chapter Four). Harris (2001) has neatly summarised such views as '...the usual hierarchies embedded in dominant discourse wherein Iban frequently emerge as socially and culturally inferior to their urban and other ethnic counterparts' (Harris 2001:143-144).

In addition, in everyday conversation in Malaysia discussion of the status of the nation's ethnic groups in terms of their relative wealth and level of 'development' is common. These views are communicated to longhouse residents through the various media they access, including 'Radio Iban', Iban programs on Television Malaysia and Malay and Iban language newspapers, such as the monthly Iban language newspaper, *Pembrita*, which is published by the Sarawak Government and reproduces much of the pro-government, pro-development rhetoric contained in the wider media. In the longhouses I frequented residents listened to Radio Iban whenever they could, and news and

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[43] Shifting cultivation could be taken to refer to a number of other hill rice-farming longhouse communities such as Bidayuh, Kenyah, Kayan and Iban communities.

[44] In the Malaysian context, references to backward 'native' peoples can be interpreted to mean the aboriginal people of peninsular Malaysia who are commonly referred to as *Orang Asli*, as well as the non-Muslim indigenous peoples of Sabah. In my experience the English term 'native' is not generally used to refer to Malay peoples. Instead, the Malaysian term *bumiputra* is used.

discussion of development were common radio topics.[45] Iban longhouse residents are aware of the Malaysian national development agenda and, in my observation, many residents are also aware that their traditional agricultural methods and way of life are identified as backward and a hindrance to development. However, this does not mean there is a common view amongst Iban on whether development is needed, or if it is on what form it should take.

Some evidence of the Iban debate on development is provided in following remarks by Datuk Celestine Ujang Anak Jilan, a prominent Iban, from a booklet on the *Iban Cultural Seminar 1993*, a forum hosted by the Sarawak Government to promote Iban culture in the context of developing Malaysia (under the banner 'Achievements and Visions'):

> The term "development" or "pemansang" is standard vocabulary of present day Ibans. We often heard of [sic] government Ministers and YBs [members of parliament] talking about "pemansang" brought about by the construction of new roads. Community leaders and the rakyat [public] are reminded to support the government lest they be left out of the mainstream of development. A person who takes an unreasonable stand and views on issues of public interests is often branded as anti-development – a term which is often sufficient to put many opponents into public oblivion. Such is the power and appeal of this magic word "development" (Jilan 1993:14).

Further on in the same volume another Iban, Douglas Ugah, comments:

> This Vision 2020 has added a new sense of urgency to the task that lies ahead...Realizing the urgency for adjustment and adaptation, we have to modify our culture and value system tomeet the changing time. The value system of a society determines its progress and development. Thus, if our value system hinders progress we must have the courage to examine and modify it' (Jilan 1993:20).

Within this complicated perspective of perception and reality it is doubly significant that social policy measures, such as education, employment, literacy, occupation and so on, support the perception that the Iban are 'backward', especially when these measures are used as yardsticks of achievement within contemporary Malaysian society and indicators for the success or failure of Vision 2020. For example, in 1994, Jawan used social policy statistics to summarise the economic status of the Iban in contemporary Malaysia as both 'underdeveloped' and 'backward' (Jawan 1994:218-223). Jawan concluded that Iban economic history was 'gloomy' and asked, 'What are the factors

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[45] Similarly, Kedit (1980a) notes in relation to research he conducted in the Lubok Antu area, including the Engkari River, that 'practically everyone interviewed said that they listened to the radio everyday' (Kedit 1980a137).

that have given rise to Iban underdevelopment? What or who can be blamed for their backwardness? Are the Iban themselves to be blamed for their own predicament?' (Jawan 1994:218).

Towards the end of the book Jawan remarks on what he identifies as some of the more general criticisms levelled at Iban society:

> Lastly it is also important to understand the general disposition of the Iban masses in order to have an overall view of their problems. In the author's view, Ibans have been wrongly accused of being wasteful shifting cultivators and tradition-bound. While they have been encouraged to change their traditional habits and enter into more stable and lucrative trades, they have not been provided with adequate measures to ensure that these changes would not make them far worse off than they already were (Jawan 1994:222).

Jawan confirms that 'wasteful shifting cultivators' and 'tradition-bound' are standard ways of referring to the Iban, but he seems to defend the Iban and to raise questions about the place of the Iban (and by implication the longhouse way of life) within modern, developing, Malaysian society. As his defence implies there is a contradiction in the conventional Malaysian view of the Iban that sees them as at once trapped in 'tradition-bound' ways of living and yet capable of development and modernisation. His comments also suggest that government rhetoric urging a change to long-established patterns of living is not necessarily matched with commitment to providing the means to do so. King has echoed these sentiments by describing the effects (and also the message) of development as 'profoundly contradictory' (King 1999c:13). Some of these contradictions are revealed in the design, function and operation of the commercial Iban longhouse tour industry in Sarawak, which this thesis describes.

This chapter has provided a summary of important details about Sarawak, the Iban, certain Iban customs and elements of longhouse life that are essential as a background to the critical analysis of longhouse tourism that follows. The chapter has shown that Sarawak has a unique history and contains a rich diversity of peoples, flora and fauna, which make it an unusual, alluring and fascinating place and, as later chapters show, a distinctive tourist attraction. It has also been demonstrated that societal relations amongst Iban people are comprised of a complex and inter-related set of economic, spiritual and material cultural processes in which longhouse residents are variously

understood and understand themselves as individuals, *bilik*-family members and community members. Those processes are closely linked with the architectural structure of the longhouses in which the Iban live. In contemporary Sarawak many Iban continue to live in longhouses. Some longhouses are built from wood and retain a 'traditional' design, although many are now built in a modern style and made of concrete, cement and brick. Lastly, this chapter has outlined a view of Iban life in the context of Malaysia's national rhetoric of development, which is important for understanding some of the contradictions of longhouse tourism and the difficulties faced by the industry in the long-term.

Chapter 2: Researching Longhouse Tours

> Ethnic tourism is a kind of caricature of ethnography, and thus a salutary inducement for the anthropologist to be self critically introspective (Van Den Berghe 1994:19).
>
> ...what one is in the field is only partially a matter of one's owns self-definition in any case, for what one is and what roles are available is very much a matter of what 'they' will let you be (Crick 1994:11).

This chapter provides preliminary observations on how the longhouse tour industry in Sarawak operates and discusses the environment in which the fieldwork was conducted. It includes discussion of why the study was undertaken and outlines methodological issues involved in the fieldwork.

Selection of a field site and research topic

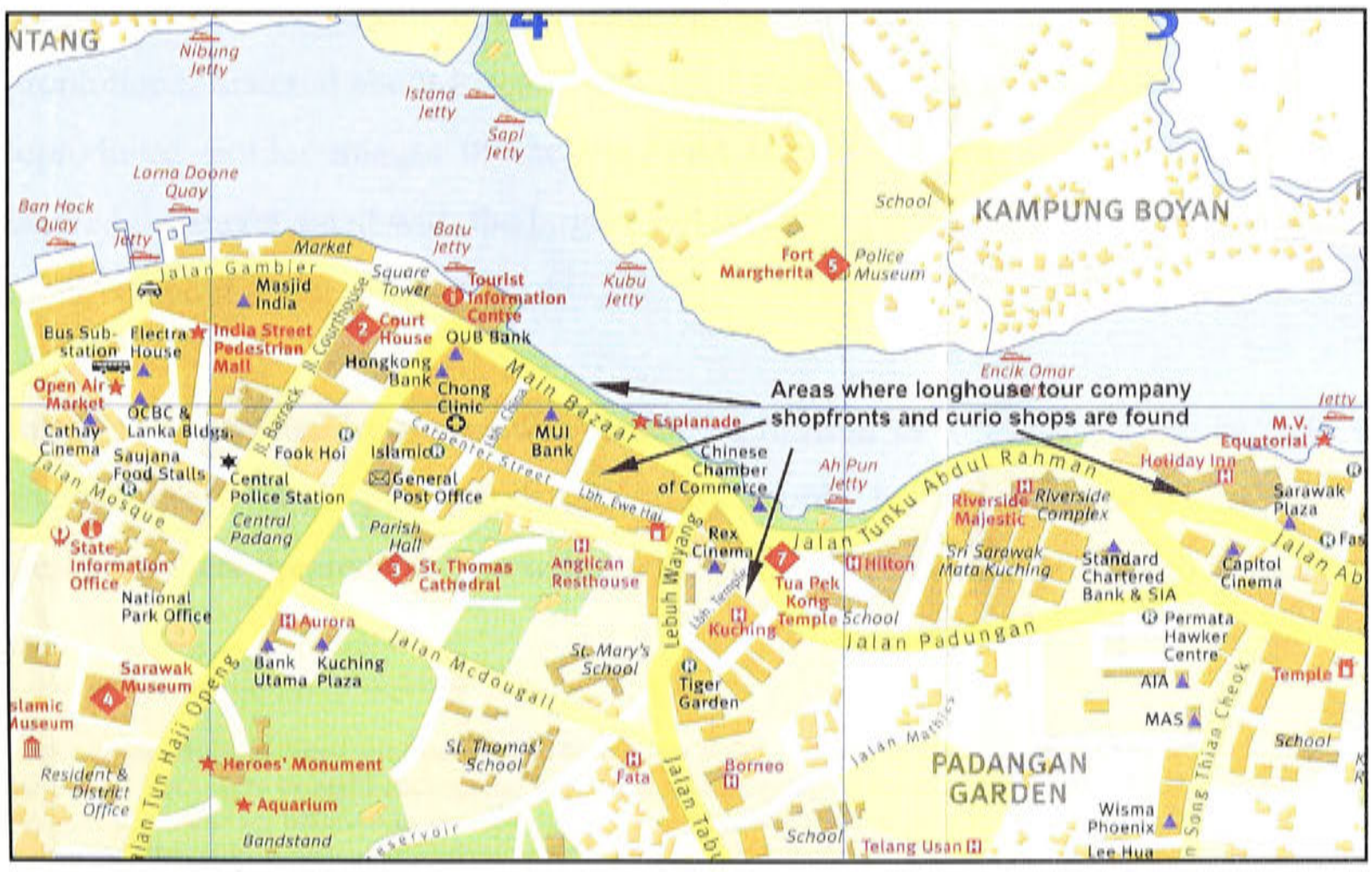
My intention when I began my doctoral studies was to undertake research on national museums in South-East Asia and to explore how such museums represent indigenous people in the context of creating and presenting a national identity that includes both indigenous and non-indigenous people.

To that end, in 1996 I conducted a preliminary, two-month field trip in Indonesia and Malaysia to view the major museums in both countries and define my research area. I visited the National Museum of Indonesia in Jakarta and, on my way to Kuala Lumpur to visit the National Museum of Malaysia, made a detour to Kuching to visit the Sarawak Museum.

The Sarawak Museum had come to my attention as a possible research focus because colleagues had mentioned that it had one of the most substantial collections of indigenous artefacts in South-East Asia. As it had once been the national museum of the former independent state of Sarawak, it fitted broadly within the terms of my research as intended at that time. Prior to leaving Canberra, I had done some preliminary reading on Sarawak. This meant that I was familiar with the history of the Brooke government in Sarawak, or 'the White Rajas', and some of the anthropological

writing on Sarawak's indigenous people, although my knowledge of Sarawak's tourism industry was restricted to travel literature and what I had gleaned from other travellers en route to Kuching.

On that first trip to Sarawak I arrived overland by bus from Pontianak in Indonesia (see Map 1, Chapter One). Upon arriving in Kuching, I visited the Sarawak Museum and explored Kuching as a tourist in a new and strange city. Over a few days I visited the main tourist attractions, including Fort Margherita, the law courts, nearby Bako National Park and Kuching's newly redeveloped waterfront. The waterfront is a prominent feature of central Kuching and popular with locals and tourists. It features an esplanade that extends from the historic Brooke period law courts and follows the bend of the Kuching River up past the Hilton Hotel to the Sarawak Shopping Plaza (see Map 3).



Map 3: Central Kuching.

Adjacent to the waterfront runs *Jalan* Main Bazaar, a busy road lined with picturesque Chinese shophouses dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The shophouses along *Jalan* Main Bazaar, and on *Jalan* Carpenter, the street behind it, are some of Kuching's most desirable commercial real estate for small businesses seeking a shopfront with maximum exposure to tourists.

As I wandered among the shops in *Jalan* Main Bazaar, I came across several small sandwich boards placed outside travel agents on the footpath and advertising 'Iban longhouse tours' and 'headhunter tours'. Each sandwich board included a series of similar illustrations: an Iban man wearing a feathered headdress shooting a blowpipe; a mist-shrouded ramshackle longhouse pictured against a backdrop of tropical jungle; an Iban woman in ceremonial attire; and images of human skulls (see Figure 3 below).[1] Adjacent to each illustration were captions with titles such as 'headhunters', 'blowpipe hunting', 'human skulls' and 'longhouse'.

The sandwich boards held an immediate appeal for me. I was intrigued by the stylised images and the simple captions. Further observation revealed that the majority of the billboards promoting longhouse tourism in and around the Kuching waterfront included similar images. In addition, after entering some tourist shops and picking up other promotional material about longhouse tours, I found that these brochures and pamphlets reproduced similar images of the Iban and Iban longhouse tours. That afternoon I entered the travel agent with the largest and most interesting of the sandwich boards and inquired about a tour.

Inside I was greeted by a man who described himself as a 'travel consultant' and who showed me a large photograph album of people he called 'headhunters' who he explained were dressed, 'as you will see them'.[2] The consultant pointed to a photograph

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[1] The human skulls pictured are Iban trophy skulls (*antu pala*). After a headhunting raid or battle where heads were taken *antu pala* were brought back to the longhouse and hung up in the *ruai* outside their owner's *bilik*. In Iban religion *antu pala* are believed to contain strong spiritual power ('juice' or 'seed') that brings the owner, his *bilik*-family and the wider longhouse community good fortune. This includes bountiful rice crops, more game for hunting and improved fertility in women (Mashman 1992:234; Freeman 1979:237; Freeman 1992:6; Jensen 1974:41). Headhunting and trophy heads were also part of courting rituals and men were encouraged by women to bring heads to the longhouse to prove their bravery, virility and suitability as a spouse (Pringle 1970:24-25; Mashman 1992:241-242; Gomes 1911; Freeman 1979:238). *Antu pala* were also used in other traditional rites, such as for summoning rain (Jensen 1974:188). *Antu pala* are no longer commonly found in Iban longhouse communities in Sarawak and many Christian Iban I met were opposed to old *antu pala* being kept at all, their view being that they should be given to the Sarawak museum or destroyed.

[2] Wide-scale headhunting had effectively ceased in Sarawak by the end of the nineteenth century, although the first three decades of the twentieth century continued to see sporadic fighting between Iban and government forces as well as Iban and Orang Ulu groups which resulted in head-taking (and there were also other isolated incidents of headhunting) (Runciman 1960; Freeman 1979:245; Freeman 1992:130-144). During World War II there was a brief resurgence in headhunting that was fostered by the Allies placing a bounty on Japanese heads (Reece 1993:149; Freeman 1979:234). Since World War II headhunting has been suppressed entirely and, together with progressively more Iban converting to Christianity, headhunting is now a bygone custom. The *antu pala* pictured in tourist

of an Iban man aiming a blow pipe at some trees and told me that he had only 'just discovered them [the Iban]' on the Skrang River.[3] Having learnt in first year Anthropology that there were no 'undiscovered' peoples left in the world, I considered this to be a rather far-fetched statement. The claim also seemed incongruous given my surroundings: I had just stepped off one of the busiest streets in Kuching, a hundred metres from where I was standing was the waterfront esplanade development, nearby was the Kuching Hilton and well-dressed people with mobile phones were standing on every corner. Sarawak did not seem like a place where a tourist or anthropologist could fortuitously stumble on the opportunity (for a considerable fee) to meet recently discovered headhunters. On that occasion, I declined the offer of a tour. However, intrigued by my experience in the waterfront travel agency, I decided to see what the Sarawak Museum library contained on longhouse tourism in Sarawak.[4]

In the library, I found a copy of Dr Peter Kedit's *Tourism Report: A Survey of the Effects of Tourism on Iban Longhouse Communities in the Skrang District, Second Division, Sarawak*, which Dr Kedit had provided to the Sarawak State Government in 1980 (Kedit 1980b). Dr Kedit's report explained that tourism was first established on the Skrang River in about 1966.[5] While it was clear from my stroll along Jalan Main Bazaar that longhouse tours were an integral part of the local tourism industry, I was surprised to learn that they had been running for 30 years,[6] particularly given that the billboards and other advertising material I had seen suggested that some communities had only just been discovered and become available for tourism.

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promotions likely date from World War II and in both Stamang and Mejong longhouses residents told me that the *antu pala* they had hung up for display to tourists were the heads of Japanese soldiers.

[3] I later learned that the pictures I had been shown were of a selection of Sarawak's non-Muslim indigenous people including, Iban, Bidayuh and Kayan people, all dressed in their different traditional costumes.

[4] I was able to do this because, the day before my visit to the travel agency, I had been given permission by the Sarawak Museum to use its library to assist me with formulating a research proposal, should I choose to undertake research in Sarawak.

[5] Kedit cites a visitors' book which he was shown at Murat longhouse in 1975 and which included visitor numbers from 1966 to 1972. The numbers are surprisingly high given the difficulty of travelling to Kuching and the Skrang River at the time. The figures are, 1966:450, 1967:520, 1968:400, 1969:580, 1970:510, 1971:480 and 1972:561.

[6] Later I discovered that the first longhouse tours had started in 1963, although they were infrequent and the Sarawak tourism industry was not well-developed at that time. Reasons for this may include the military confrontation (popularly known as the '*confrontasi*') between Malaysia and Indonesia that was fought along the Sarawak-Sabah/Kalimantan border from 1963 until 1966 and the presence of local-born Chinese communist guerrillas in Sarawak. For a brief history of the conflict see Dennis and Grey (1996).

Figure 3: Sandwich board street sign advertising longhouse tours on *Jalan* Main Bazaar, Kuching.[7]

The discrepancy between the claims of the tour operators and the history of the local tourism industry settled my interest in researching longhouse tours. In particular, I began to wonder about the level of agency Iban longhouse residents had in devising, marketing and providing longhouse tours. In turn, that question brought me back to my original research interest in the way that indigenous populations are represented. However, I decided that I was going to explore that issue in the context of longhouse tourism, which could involve fieldwork with those being represented, rather than in the context of national museums.

After a few more weeks in Sarawak, and after doing some preliminary research in order to formulate my research proposal (although without taking a longhouse tour, due to their prohibitive cost), I returned to Australia and began preparations to undertake fieldwork in Sarawak researching longhouse tourism.

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[7] The man pictured on the top left hand side of the board is Tuai Rumah Bansing of Murat longhouse (he is discussed further in Chapters Five and Seven). The longhouse pictured is not Murat as it stood in the 1990s and is either an historical photograph of Murat or another longhouse entirely. I am not able to identify the other longhouse residents pictured.

From Canberra, I submitted a research proposal to the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia (the Economic Unit), which was a requirement at that time for all Australian students conducting research in Malaysia in the field of social sciences. Six months later, a research permit was approved, although two conditions were placed on it. The first was that I had to provide the Economic Unit with a report on my research findings (I supplied the report two months after completing fieldwork). The second requirement was that would I not travel to Belaga or anywhere near the area proposed for the Bakun hydroelectric dam.[8]

In addition, I was required to obtain approval for the research from the Sarawak State Planning Unit (the Planning Unit) and the Ministry of Tourism, Sarawak. Approval was granted around the same time as my permit from the Economic Unit and, in line with government policy, the Planning Unit selected a sponsor institution for my work and a field supervisor. The Sarawak Museum was selected as my sponsor and Dr Kedit, who was the Director of the Sarawak Museum at that time, became my field supervisor. The Sarawak Museum provided occasional office facilities during fieldwork.

Fieldwork was carried out between September 1995 and September 1996. During that time I spent lengthy periods residing in tourist longhouses, interspersed with periods living in Kuching. In January 2001 I returned to Sarawak for three weeks to visit some of the tourist longhouse communities with whom I had stayed in 1996.

Methodological concerns and research strategies

Choice of research method

When I started fieldwork in Sarawak, the first issue that arose was how to select an appropriate tourist longhouse or tourist longhouses in which to conduct my research. I

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[8] The Bakun hydroelectric dam was at the time and remains a highly contentious issue, as it required the relocation of several longhouse communities and the flooding of a vast area of forest. The dam project has been widely criticised by international environmental and indigenous advocacy groups (see www.suaram.org/bakun; www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/24/Malaysia; www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings; www.irn.org/wcd/bakun.shtml and

also had to decide whether focusing on one longhouse community or trying to conduct research in a number of communities would best illuminate the issues I wanted to consider.

My initial plan was to limit research to longhouse communities on the Skrang River, and, if possible, to one main tourist longhouse. This was because my preliminary research had revealed that, while most organised longhouse tourism occurs on three major rivers, the Skrang River, the Lemanak River, and the Batang Ai River and its tributaries such as the Engkari River (see Map 4 below), the Skrang River is the longest-established tourist destination (followed by the Lemanak River and the Batang Ai River).[9] It was my view that the best communities to talk to about longhouse tourism would be those with the greatest experience, as I believed that the residents would have the most well-informed understanding of the industry and the most to say about their role.

Accordingly, the Sarawak Museum introduced me to some residents of the longhouse Nanga Mejong (Mejong), situated on the Skrang River, and provided me with a formal letter of introduction in Iban to assist me when presenting myself to the *Tuai Rumah*, other longhouse residents, tour operators and guides.[10] My intention was to establish myself in the Mejong longhouse and negotiate with residents to stay on a long-term basis. I imagined that I would be able to come to an agreement with longhouse residents that enabled me to pay for accommodation and food at a lower rate than the tourists.

In this proposed endeavour, I had, to some extent, fallen foul of longhouse tour marketing, as I assumed that the Mejong residents would welcome my arrival and allow me to negotiate my stay based on some affordable compromise between commercial practice and 'traditional Iban hospitality' (see Chapter Five). I also assumed that,

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Coalition of Concerned NGOs on Bakun 1999). The Malaysian government is sensitive to foreign media reports on the dam and the area is off limits to most foreigners.

[9] Kadir Din's 1995 study of Skrang River longhouse tourism noted that 68.80% of *bilik*-families in Skrang River tourist longhouses had been involved with tourism for between 19 and 23 years and a further 16% involved for between 14 and 18 years (Kadir Din 1995:30).

[10] The letter is not included as an appendix, as all copies were distributed or misplaced during fieldwork.

although I would be required to pay 'tourist price' for some things, the community would recognise that I was a researcher engaged in an academic endeavour.

However, within the first few months of fieldwork I began to realise that this strategy required revision. Although in that time I made numerous trips to the Skrang River, varying in duration from a few days to two and a half weeks, and stayed for sustained periods in Mejong Longhouse, I found it was difficult to position myself as a researcher in the Skrang River area. There were two main reasons for this:

First, at Skrang River tourist longhouses, arranging accommodation other than in a purpose-built tourist guesthouse was difficult.[11] Longhouse residents were so used to dealing with tourists, and so involved with managing them on a daily basis, that they had no desire to negotiate alternative accommodation arrangements with somebody who was, in their eyes, essentially another tourist. Being perceived as a tourist and staying in the guesthouse significantly impeded my ability to gain an understanding of the diversity of longhouse life, especially the activities and interactions that occurred when the tourists were not around.

Secondly, I had entered an environment where payment for almost every activity was required and where my relationship with the community as anthropologist was mediated almost solely through money. Although I had expected my research to be costly in comparison to research in non-tourist areas of Sarawak, I was unprepared for just how much more expensive it was going to be.

Essentially, because longhouse communities on the Skrang River have been involved with tourism for over 30 years, residents were used to foreigners paying to visit and 'study' longhouse life. They had little sympathy for the distinction I tried to draw between 'researcher' and 'tourist'. Indeed, in every tourist longhouse in which I spent

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[11] Occasionally I was fortunate enough to be able to stay in the *bilik* of a family member of a resident of Mejong longhouse.

time (including Stamang where I stayed longest) I am certain that some residents continued to regard me as some kind of 'long-term' or 'repeat-visit' tourist.[12]

Consequently, in those early months it became clear that the residents of Mejong did not support the idea of a 'long-term tourist' staying with them at a reduced rate and for extended periods of time. They saw it as inconsistent with their view of what Western visitors wanted and how they should be treated and with the economic arrangements already established by tourism.

It is clear to me now that, for the residents of Mejong and for the majority of Skrang River longhouse residents, perceiving foreigners as anything other than '*turis*' (tourist) is unnecessary and not worthwhile. Tourist longhouses are running a business, based on satisfying the needs of Westerners. My request, had it been granted, would have suggested to tourists and tour companies that rates and charges were negotiable and perhaps compromised future prices for the tourist services the longhouse offered. Since every tourist and Western visitor (including, as I discovered later, foreign and local documentary filmmakers, television crews and journalists) that had visited Mejong over the last 30 years had paid 'tourist price', there was no reason to assume that I was any different. In addition, I discovered that other researchers who had visited Skrang River tourist longhouses, such as Kedit (1980b), Kedit and Sabang (1993), Kadir Din (1995) and Zeppel (1994), had paid for their food and accommodation on similar terms to tourists.

However, from my perspective, the option of paying tourist price for a year's research on the Skrang River was financially unsustainable. Longhouse tours are not cheap. Even basic guesthouse accommodation comes at a premium in tourist longhouses and paying tourist price for one night and two days can mean an amount of up to approximately $100 MYR.[13] It became clear that situating myself primarily at Mejong,

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[12] Crick, writing about tourism in Kandy, Sri Lanka, comments on a similar experience with his fieldwork (1994:10-13).

[13] This would include accommodation, dinner, rice wine, breakfast, lunch and drinks. Transport to and from the longhouse by longboat incurs a separate charge (see Chapter Six).

or in any of the other longhouses on the Skrang River, was not tenable for me at that time.[14]

This realisation coincided with a growing understanding that, despite first impressions, longhouse communities along the Skrang River (and other rivers) all had very different experiences of tourism and that every tourist longhouse had a different tourism history. For example, some longhouse communities had been involved with tourism continuously for 30 years, some had been involved in the past but were no longer receiving tourists, and other communities had ceased their business relationship with one company and started with another.

It became clear to me that I needed to gain a broad understanding of the diversity of business arrangements in tourist longhouses if I was to understand the context in which communities negotiate and maintain their involvement with tourism. In such an environment, the most effective means of fieldwork seemed to be a multi-site-based one, visiting as many tourist longhouses as possible along the river systems where longhouse communities were involved in organised tourism. Incidentally, this meant that I was able to stay in Kuching between trips to longhouses, which significantly reduced my expenses (a night in a guesthouse in Kuching and a cheap meal was far cheaper than a night in a tourist longhouse).

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[14] In discussions with colleagues undertaking anthropological research in non-tourist parts of Sarawak, I discovered that, for them, the notion that fieldwork in a longhouse community should involve scheduled payments for accommodation and meals on a per-item basis (for example, breakfast with a cup of tea) was completely foreign. The idea of day-to-day negotiation with longhouse residents over which aspects of their life they should charge to view, record, or participate in, was viewed at times with disbelief. Typical field arrangements negotiated with non-tourist longhouse communities involved contributing to longhouse life in a manner that followed the everyday patterns of residents, such as sharing the cost of food, clothing, fuel and other necessities (pers.comm.Amanda Harris, Vinson Sutlive, Antonio Guerrerio and Robert Winzler). After several visits to non-tourist longhouses in Sarawak and continued informal discussion with other locals and researchers it became clear that one of the defining characteristics of studying longhouse tours and my field site was, what I term, 'user pays' anthropology. A good general indicator of this 'user pays' ethic amongst Iban involved with tourism was the terms which they used to describe foreign visitors. On the Skrang River almost all foreign visitors were referred to by the term *'turis'*, and occasionally '*untong*', a derogatory use of the Iban word for profit. In contrast, on the Engkari River (where tourism had been established for less than five years) tourists were referred to by the more polite Iban term *'temuai'*, meaning guest. Older residents would occasionally use the term '*tuan*' meaning 'Sir' or 'Mr'. On the Skrang River '*tuan*' was only used condescendingly, when addressing difficult tourists. On the Lemanak River where tourism was well established, but not to the same extant as on the Skrang River, a combination of '*turis*', '*temuai*' and '*orang putih*' was used. *Orang putih* literally means 'white person', although its use is similar to the English term 'foreigner' and it has the same usage in Malay and Indonesian. Depending on the context, its use can be either polite or impolite.

Once I had made this decision, I made as many trips as possible to Skrang River longhouses other than Mejong, including Nanga Murat, Belaie, Nanga Tebat, Jambu and Bunu. In addition, I made several trips to the Lemanak River, staying at Serubah and visiting Nanga Kasit Ulu, both tourist longhouses. As I made these trips and met more and more of the people associated with longhouse tourism, I began to forge relationships with people in the industry. Ultimately, those relationships led me to Stamang longhouse on the Engkari River (see below), which became the primary fieldsite for my research, although I continued to visit other tourist longhouses. The combination of my experience visiting most of the longhouse communities involved with organised tourism in Sarawak at that time, and in-depth research in the Stamang community, provided the information and understanding that is the basis for this thesis.

Map 4: Detail of study area showing approximate position of major tourist longhouses (see text in red) in the period 1995-1997. The distance from the Lachau rest stop to Stamang longhouse is approximately 120 kilometres, travelling by road and longboat.

Association with longhouse tour companies

Prior to beginning fieldwork my intention was to conduct research independently and not associate myself with any individual longhouse tour company. I assumed that associating myself with a company would burden me with responsibilities and obligations and, quite wrongly as it turned out, that longhouse residents would have a negative view of the tour companies (in fact, as I later discovered, they more often welcomed the companies as providers of business opportunities). I also wanted to avoid

being directly associated with Malaysian state or federal governments, as many Iban are suspicious of government and I thought this would significantly reduce the willingness of residents to express their views on tourism.[15]

However, once I had started my research I realised that fieldwork without the assistance of a tour company was impossible, because it would put longhouse residents in a difficult position vis-à-vis the company, or companies, that brought tourists to their longhouse.

Furthermore, there was no point trying to avoid the fact that I was a state-sanctioned researcher and had permission to stay long-term, because some longhouse residents, and the *Tuai Rumah* in particular, wanted to establish whether I was a tourist trying to stay on in Sarawak without a visa. I had no choice other than to explain the purpose of my research to longhouse residents and tour company personnel and show them my government authorisation documents.

Nevertheless, the fact that I could demonstrate that my presence in longhouses was state-approved, did not necessarily curb the disapproval of individual tour companies and it became clear that some compromise was necessary in order to situate myself in the field. The necessary compromise was to agree to work with the approval and assistance of tour companies. On the Skrang and Lemanak Rivers and in one longhouse on the Batang Ai River System this limited the research I was able to carry out.

For example, although tour company staff were helpful, and obtaining interviews with senior staff, managers, guides and so on was not difficult, the suggestion that I might conduct research in 'the company longhouse' in greater depth than was provided by joining one or two tours did not meet with the same level of assistance. Two longhouse

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[15] Detailed discussion of Iban suspicion of government is outside the scope of the thesis, as is the question of how that suspicion relates to Iban political history, or how informed it is as a critique of government policy and practice (for a comprehensive discussion of these issues see Jawan (1993, 1994)). However, I note that there is a widespread perception in Iban communities that they are marginal members of the Malaysian body politic and that little development occurs in Iban areas because government is primarily concerned with development that benefits Malays. Furthermore, there is a perception that Iban areas are used as a resource, such as for logging or damming for hydroelectric schemes, but that benefits do not flow back to the community. Cleary and Eaton's observations on 'core-periphery' development patterns in Borneo suggest that such views have a basis in reality (Cleary and Eaton 1992:168-172).

tour companies communicated to the residents of 'their' longhouses that they did not support the presence of a 'researcher' in those longhouses. Another tour company manager informed me that I was welcome to a free tour because I was a state-sanctioned researcher, but that my long-term presence in 'the company longhouse' was unwanted and residents would be informed of this. When I suggested that I could go to the longhouse and talk to residents independently the manager informed me that longhouse residents, and in particular the *Tuai Rumah*, would comply with the company's wishes and I would be asked to leave. While longhouse residents are, theoretically, free to reject such advice, actually doing so is difficult, especially where the tour company is responsible for a significant amount of employment and cash income in a community.

Furthermore, it became clear that with organised longhouse tourism the role of the *Tuai Rumah*, as the longhouse community spokesperson and intermediary between community and company, is crucial. If the *Tuai Rumah* of a longhouse community involved with tourism was told by a tour company that I was not welcome the community was likely to heed that advice if the *Tuai Rumah* chose to pass it on.[16]

Attempting to work within these and other caveats that certain tour companies thought necessary to impose on me often had absurd results. For example, in tourist longhouses serviced by more than one tour company, on one night I would be free to talk and interact with tourists during their visit while, on another night, a company tour guide would inform me that I was not welcome to observe or be involved in any activities associated with the tour group. When that happened I would spend the night in a *bilik* out of sight from tourists.

However, over time, the attitude of those tour companies that had initially been unsupportive of longhouse-based research became more positive. In addition, I slowly became more knowledgeable about the dynamic between particular tour companies, longhouse communities and individual residents and that allowed me to more skilfully

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[16] I am not suggesting here that longhouse residents act on the advice of their *Tuai Rumah* without question or debate. As noted in Chapter One, a *Tuai Rumah* is elected by the community and maintains his or her position by retaining the community's respect. However, the above demonstrates the influence that a *Tuai Rumah* has as a consequence of his or her position, especially in the context of longhouse communities that maintain business arrangements with tour operators.

negotiate my presence. By the end of my fieldwork I had visited most of the Iban longhouses regularly involved with organised tourism at that time and had stayed in the majority of them for varying lengths of time (see Map 2).[17]

Negotiating access to Stamang longhouse

As mentioned above, after several trips back and forth to the Skrang and Lemanak Rivers, I began to establish friendships with tour guides and other tour company personnel. Only one major road (the Pan Borneo Highway) runs from Kuching to the Skrang, Lemanak and Engkari Rivers and tour groups stop in the same towns and at the same place almost every day. Meeting up with or running into tour company staff on the road was therefore a natural development. In addition, because of the frequency of tours, I would regularly meet up with tour company staff once or twice a week in the various longhouses in which they worked bringing tourists back and forth from Kuching.

In this context, the distinction between tour company 'management' and tour company 'employees' became important. In general, it was the managers or owners of longhouse tour companies who were wary or against my long-term presence in tourist longhouses, while many employees, such as drivers and guides, who controlled much of the on-the-ground implementation of longhouse tourism, were more than happy to 'turn a blind eye'. Drivers and guides would frequently offer me a lift or even take a rest from work and let tourists question me about my research.

In this way, and with the assistance of a mutual friend, I met staff from Asian Overland Services Tours and Travel (AOS), a Kuala Lumpur-based tour company that had at that time recently established regular tours to Stamang, a longhouse on the Engkari River.

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[17] Longhouse communities that are difficult to access receive tours only one or two times a year, usually by special arrangement. These longhouses are not part of the everyday organised longhouse tour industry and I did not visit them. In addition, there are some longhouse communities close to the Gunung Mulu and Niah Caves National Parks (near to the town of Miri) that receive organised tours. As both parks are approximately 450 kilometres away from Kuching, situated at the eastern end of Sarawak (around 12 hours away by bus), it was not feasible to include these communities in my research. Of all the Iban longhouse communities involved with tourism near Kuching, the focus area of the thesis, the only longhouse community heavily involved with organised tourism that I did not visit was Nanga Sumpa on the Batang Ai River system, because the company that ran tours to that longhouse would not agree to any visits by researchers.

AOS had invested a considerable sum of money in the project and was seeking to capitalize on its investment, which it presented as an 'ecotourism' venture (see Chapter Seven). In my opinion, the company considered that having an independent researcher 'study' and report on the project helped to legitimise it, especially as the researcher's presence could then be marketed as evidence of the company's commitment to well-planned, community-based 'ecotourism'.

It was in this context that I approached the Manager of the Kuching Branch of AOS and asked 'permission' to undertake research in Stamang and he granted it, conditional on approval from the company's head office in Kuala Lumpur.[18] I forwarded a written request to Kuala Lumpur and a few days later received a facsimile granting permission to undertake research, with the condition that I write a 'report' when I had completed it.[19]

Several months later, I discovered that the Kuching Branch Manager's approach to AOS's project at Stamang was unpopular with management in Kuala Lumpur, and, shortly before I returned to Australia, he was sacked for allowing longhouse residents to make changes to the physical condition of the longhouse and its surrounds without consulting AOS and, to quote a management representative from Kuala Lumpur, for 'not running the longhouse like a business'.[20] Consequently, and coinciding with my departure for home, all research projects in the longhouse were cancelled on the basis that they 'interfered with business'. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the sacking of the Branch Manager and the banning of researchers formed part of

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[18] AOS's readiness to encourage researchers to evaluate its project extended beyond me. A Norwegian anthropology postgraduate, Kjartan Eide, was undertaking research in Stamang for part of the time I was there (Eide 1998) and, on several occasions, we made joint trips to the community (I must acknowledge here that AOS's willingness to accept my presence in Stamang was partly due to a recommendation made by Kjartan that further research would benefit AOS's project). In addition, a German student researching tourism marketing had visited Stamang for a few days several times in 1995 and 1996, a Malaysian student sponsored by the Wildlife Conservation Society stayed for around a month, and two other researchers, John Caslake and Heather Zeppel, had visited in 1992 (each for a period of around two weeks). It is ironic that so many researchers studied Stamang as a 'typical' example of an Iban tourist longhouse, when the steady flow of researchers made it rather atypical in comparison to other tourist longhouse communities.

[19] AOS did not provide any clear terms of reference for the report other than that I make recommendations for 'improving' the project.

[20] It was also significant that he was the only indigenous manager of any tour company in Kuching at that time. Chinese AOS staff from Kuala Lumpur informed me later that it was felt by senior staff members that he was 'too sympathetic' towards longhouse residents.

preparations for the winding up of AOS's involvement with the Stamang community, which I discuss in Chapter Seven.

However, during my time at Stamang there were no conditions placed on my presence in the longhouse. I was given access to free transport (by filling any vacant seats available on tours) and allowed to take part in all of the activities organised for tourists during their tours. I was not required to stay in the guesthouse. I negotiated with longhouse residents to stay in the *bilik* of Pengulu Rentap and, when he was away, next door in the *bilik* of his brother, Tuai Rumah Sonuk.[21] Payment for my accommodation was negotiated so that I paid a percentage of household expenses, rather than being charged a nightly tourist fee or 'head tax' (see Chapter Six).

While Stamang and the Engkari River (as opposed to Mejong and the Skrang River) became my primary field site, fieldwork remained multi-sited and I continued to travel back and forth to Kuching and to other tourist longhouses. In this context, Stamang, which had been involved with tourism for a relatively short period of time (from 1992 onwards), provided a useful contrast with more established tourist longhouses on the Skrang and Lemanak Rivers.

Moreover, after spending time at Stamang and in tourist longhouses on the Skrang and Lemanak Rivers, I became convinced of the need to compare the lives of residents in tourist longhouses with the lives of residents in longhouses not involved with organised tourism (non-tourist longhouses). In tourist longhouses a significant portion of daily life revolved around staged events for tourists (see Chapter Six). For that reason, in particular, I felt it was necessary to secure an understanding of the wider context of Iban longhouse life in Sarawak in order to understand more fully how the residents of tourist longhouses negotiate and manage their involvement with tourism. Accordingly, I set about negotiating access to a variety of non-tourist longhouses.

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[21] During my first visit to Stamang Tuai Rumah Sunok told me that, a few days prior to my arrival, he had called a longhouse-wide meeting to discuss my proposed research with the community and to gain approval for it. Tuai Rumah explained that the meeting was held in the evening in the *ruai* and that a representative, or several, from every *bilik* in the longhouse had attended and, after some discussion, it was agreed that I could stay and conduct research. I

Research in non-tourist longhouses

In general, negotiating access to non-tourist longhouses was far less difficult than negotiating access to tourist longhouses. However, I took a cautious approach to the issue, after my exposure to the tourist longhouse environment. In addition, during my initial fieldwork period, when I was a frequent visitor to Mejong longhouse on the Skrang River, I had witnessed two incidents where tourists travelling independently had arrived at the longhouse without warning, expecting open-armed and spontaneous 'longhouse hospitality'. Instead, in both cases, residents assumed the visitors were fee-paying guests, according to the usual business arrangements (see Chapter Six). These events occurred because of mismatched expectations and were not dissimilar to my own experience when I first arrived. Consequently, I was concerned that any time I spent in a non-tourist longhouse would take place only after an invitation had been extended, or in circumstances where the reason and context for my visit were clear.

However, for this part of my fieldwork, my cautious approach turned out to be unnecessary as my visits to non-tourist longhouses eventuated quite naturally in two ways:

First, while staying at Stamang I accompanied longhouse residents on trips to buy supplies at Lubok Antu, the nearest town offering services (including a district office and a market).[22] There, I was introduced to friends and relatives of residents from Stamang living in longhouses close to town. Travelling to other longhouses to visit friends and family (often to take part in religious festivals) is a common pursuit[23] and I was fortunate to be invited back to spend a night or two with friends in a longhouse close to Lubok Antu on more than one occasion. Eventually, travelling with Iban friends and staying in non-tourist longhouses became part of everyday life and the need to consciously consider how to visit non-tourist longhouses became unnecessary.

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am certain that the community's decision was strongly influenced by AOS's decision to grant me 'permission' to stay at Stamang and that, without it, the outcome of the community meeting could have been very different.

[22] The district office has carriage of various government administrative matters, such as issuing birth certificates and certifying marriage certificates issued by a *Pengulu* for couples married according to *adat* Iban.

Secondly, I was fortunate enough to be invited to make three short trips to non-tourist longhouses in other regions of Sarawak. The first occasion was at the invitation of Dr James Masing, who was the Assistant Minister for Tourism in Sarawak at that time.[24] Dr Masing invited me to accompany him on a field trip to the upper Baleh River for five days, where I stayed with him in two longhouses. The second occasion was at the invitation of Dr Amanda Harris, an anthropologist from the University of Newcastle (Australia), who invited me to stay for several days in the longhouse near the town of Pakan that was her primary field site. On the third occasion, I was invited by the Song Medical Clinic to participate in a week-long field trip surveying the health of longhouse communities. On that trip I was able to visit four such communities between the towns of Song and Kapit on the Rajang River.

Overall, I spent approximately four and a half weeks in non-tourist longhouses and, although a relatively short time, I felt it was long enough to enable me to gain a perspective on life in longhouse communities not involved with organised tourism and to have a basis for comparing and understanding life in tourist longhouses.

Research methods

Longhouses

In tourist and non-tourist longhouses the majority of my material was collected during informal discussions with longhouse residents or tourists, following the standard anthropological methodology of participant observation. In tourist longhouses where I was only visiting for a short period I made sure that I always spoke with the *Tuai Rumah* and with the residents directly involved with providing entertainment for tourists, such as those whose turn it was to dance or provide the musical accompaniment. At Stamang, because I was there for a much longer period, I was able to discuss tourism with a broad cross-section of the community, as well as Tuai Rumah Sonuk and Pengulu Rentap. As my research agenda in non-tourist longhouses was not

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[23] Furthermore, in my experience unmarried Iban men are always looking for an excuse to go and stay in another longhouse, to escape the drudgery of farm work, meet new people and enjoy themselves.
[24] He later became Sarawak State Minister for Tourism.

as specific, I allowed the individual circumstances of each longhouse visit to shape my experience, including the people with whom I spoke.

In addition to these informal discussions I conducted a series of taped interviews with residents of tourist longhouses. Depending on participants' wishes, interviews were conducted in the *ruai* or in private inside the participant's *bilik*. Because of the multi-sited nature of the fieldwork, it was not practical to interview a member of every *bilik*-family in all the tourist longhouses I visited. Instead, interviewees were selected on an informal basis from among persons who expressed a willingness to discuss organised tourism. As might be expected, the majority of the interviews were conducted with residents from Stamang.

Longhouse tour companies

While in Kuching I approached every major longhouse tour company requesting a formal taped interview, to which most managers or company owners agreed. For each interview, a standard set of questions in English was used to stimulate conversation (Appendix A). In addition, two formal interviews with senior government figures associated with the Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) were granted.

I also conducted informal taped interviews with a selection of Kuching-based longhouse tour guides. Other information was gathered through discussions with tour industry personnel during longhouse tours or while socialising with them in Kuching.

Language

Longhouse tourism involves Iban longhouse residents developing cooperative business relationships with a diverse range of people. These include the tour operators, the majority of whom are Malaysian ethnic Chinese (usually from Sarawak, although some are from West Malaysia), the tour guides, who include members of Sarawak's other ethnic groups, such as Bidayuh and Malay, and, of course, the tourists themselves. The following section of this chapter identifies the main languages used in the longhouse tourism industry, comments on their significance as part of the complex linguistic

environment in which longhouse tourism occurs and acknowledges the limitations and methodological issues raised by the multilingual context of longhouse tourism.

At the broadest level, English is the *lingua franca* of the longhouse tour industry, although Malay, Iban, Hakka, Hokkien and Bidayuh are in frequent use. A general condition of employment for longhouse tour guides is the ability to speak English to a conversational level. Tour companies require English-speaking guides because most tourists to longhouses, regardless of their native country, can converse in or understand basic English.[25]

Of the local-born Sarawak population Chinese and Malays have the best command of English, followed by Bidayuh and Iban. These differences can be understood partly as a consequence of each ethnic group's different, yet interwoven, colonial histories, particularly during the Brooke period (Pringle 1970:320-326).[26] As Jawan (1994), writing on economic development during the Brooke and colonial periods notes:

> ..."divide and rule" was the hallmark of Brooke policy. Each ethnic group had specific functions in the Brooke government. The Ibans were their warriors, whom the Brookes saw as having a rich non-literate tradition, which they were determined to preserve; the Malays served as junior administrators, who benefited from the limited educational opportunities that were then available; the Chinese were the money-makers, who provided the government with the labour for industrial and agricultural development...Thus it is contended, that the important legacy left by the Brookes was divided ethnic communities, compartmentalised by various gaps in development between them (Jawan 1994:171, 174).

The differences are also a product of the different economic and social conditions of each group in contemporary Malaysia. Today, although free state-sponsored education is available to all in Sarawak, disparities in education levels between Sarawak's different ethnic communities remain. For example, many Chinese are well educated, whereas few older Iban have more than a basic secondary education (King and Jawan 1996:210).[27] In fact, as Kadir Din's research on Skrang River longhouse tourism in 1995 notes, 81% of residents in longhouses involved with tourism had no schooling

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[25] As will be discussed in Chapter Three, tourists to longhouses are mostly from Western European countries.

[26] Pringle (1970) provides a detailed analysis of this element of Brooke rule. Pringle argues that the Brooke family sought to keep the greater proportion of the Iban population uneducated to preserve their usefulness and willingness to act as a loyal military force (Pringle 1970: 320-349).

[27] For example, in 1960 only 6% of Sarawak's Iban population were literate, in 1970 the figure was 20% and in 1980, 35%. In contrast, the literacy rate for the Chinese population over the same period was as follows: 1960 (53%), 1970 (60%), 1980 (74%) and for Malays: 1960 (25%), 1970 (43%) and 1980 (62%) (Jawan 1993:213).

(Kadir Din 1995:16). The situation is similar amongst Sarawak's other indigenous non-Malay people with the exception of the Bidayuh, as their traditional lands are in close proximity to Kuching and, historically, they have had greater access to educational facilities (see Jawan 1993:29-33 and Jawan 1994:208-22 for detailed discussion).

During my fieldwork I observed that longhouse residents often made attempts to talk in English with tourists, although with most residents in-depth conversation was only possible if a tour guide translated. There was no expectation that tourists should try and speak Iban, although residents were extremely appreciative of any attempt. Longhouse residents often remarked that a significant benefit from tourism was that it provided an opportunity for many in the community to learn a degree of English, something they perceived as a valuable skill, and parents encouraged their children to talk as much as possible with tourists.

In addition to English, a range of other languages play significant roles in the Sarawak longhouse tourism industry. This is primarily because the different ethnic groups involved in the industry speak such a diverse range of languages, from Malay and Iban, which are similar but not mutually intelligible (Richards 1997:vii) to English, Hakka and Hokkien, which are vastly different languages.[28] Hakka and Hokkien are dialects native to Sarawak's ethnic Chinese population and Bidayuh is the native language of the Bidayuh people.[29] Language diversity is a significant feature of the cultural milieu in which longhouse tours take place and issues of identity and socio-economic status among the different communities involved in longhouse tourism are emphasised and contested through the use of each community's language and the community's command of different languages. Perhaps the best example of this is the Sarawak Chinese who demonstrate the greatest variation and contextual use of language in the longhouse tour industry and who (as discussed in later chapters) own and run the majority of longhouse tour companies.[30]

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[28] Iban and Malay are distinct languages, although 60% of basic Iban and Malay words are cognates. Although the Iban population of Sarawak and Borneo is relatively small (around 500,000), the Iban language is spoken widely across northern Borneo and in some parts of Kalimantan (Sutlive and Sutlive 1993:vii).

[29] The Bidayuh are also referred to as 'Land Dayaks', particularly in older English-language literature.

[30] In the rural regions with a majority Iban population (see Map 2, Chapter One) Chinese shop owners usually speak Iban, Malay and English, as well as their own native dialect.

The multilingualism of the Sarawak Chinese is, in part, the result of their historical and ongoing position as merchants and cultural brokers and it enables them to operate successfully in all the different aspects of the tourism industry (Pringle 1970:320-347; Jawan 1994:25). For example, when I was visiting Kuching or working with tour companies there, I noticed that, amongst the Chinese management and staff, communication generally took place almost solely in whichever native Chinese dialect the majority of staff spoke (predominantly Hakka or Hokkien). Often it was the case that Chinese staff and managers chose to speak in English or Malay only when dealing with customers or staff who were not Chinese. This contextual use of language served to reinforce the ethnic distinction between the owner/management level of the tour company and the staff.

In contrast, communication between Chinese tour company personnel and longhouse residents was usually in Iban, because very few longhouse residents could speak a local Chinese language and tour operators were generally eager to facilitate smooth communication and demonstrate their awareness of Iban cultural sensitivities by not speaking Malay. Most business-related discussions that I witnessed between longhouse residents and tour operators were conducted in Iban. For the sake of clarity, correspondence between longhouse residents and tour operators was often in Malay and Iban or English and Iban.

In the longhouse tour industry, as with Sarawak generally, the spoken use of Malay varies considerably, depending on the context and the ethnicity of the speaker. In the longhouses that I visited on the Skrang, Lemanak and Engkari Rivers the majority of older and middle-aged residents spoke Malay to a level they described as 'everyday' or 'market' Malay (*bahasa pasar*), whereas the majority of children of high school age spoke Malay well. This is because, up to late primary school, Iban children from rural longhouse communities are usually educated in small local schools situated near their longhouses (often on the same river) and are taught in both Iban and Malay. However, once they reach high school, classes are only taught in Malay and all students must study Malay as the national language. Further, all high school level exams are in Malay

and if students wish to continue to the final years of high school or university they must possess sound Malay language skills.[31]

Many longhouse residents speak only Iban (and basic Malay).[32] This is because nearly all Iban longhouse communities are found in areas of Sarawak where Iban make up a substantial proportion of the population (see Map 2, Chapter One) and the tendency is for Iban to be the spoken *lingua franca* in local towns and trading posts. In most towns, local non-Iban residents, such as Chinese storeowners and Malay officials, can converse in Iban.[33] In larger towns in Iban areas, such as Sri Aman, Malay is also common, although Iban is widely understood. Therefore, for many longhouse residents, and particularly those who are earning their living as farmers, there is little need to develop other language skills, particularly English, which is to their disadvantage in the tourism industry.

Furthermore, to assert an Iban identity longhouse residents frequently speak only Iban in certain contexts, such as when dealing with government officials. During longhouse tours I frequently observed that if a Malay tour guide addressed a longhouse resident using Malay, the resident would usually reply in Iban to indicate that Malay was understood but that in the longhouse Iban was the preferred language. Longhouse residents made it clear that I should learn and speak Iban and I was frequently admonished and told to speak Iban if I used a Malay or Indonesian term.

As the above indicates, the Sarawak longhouse tourism industry is a multilingual environment and, as a researcher trying to immerse myself in the business of longhouse tourism (as well as longhouse life), there was no single language that allowed me to participate in or understand all the conversations and activities that form part of the

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[31] Use of Malay in high schools in Iban areas was often discussed amongst parents and older longhouse residents. Due to the remoteness of many longhouses a high school education meant several months of boarding each year. When many children returned to their longhouse they were often more fluent in Malay than Iban and many older residents, who spoke only Iban, found communicating with the younger generation difficult for this reason. For example, on the few occasions that I was fortunate enough to witness an older member of the longhouse recite a *pantun* (an Iban parable) I would ask residents sitting nearby in the *ruai* for assistance translating. I discovered on these occasions that many children of high school age were as unfamiliar with some Iban words as I. In these circumstances, it is possible that, as further generations of Iban children are educated in Malay, Malay will take over as the *lingua franca* in towns in Iban areas.

[32] As a rule, older longhouse residents prefer communicating in Iban.

[33] Malay is more common with written material.

daily business of longhouse tourism. For example, when travelling from Kuching to the Skrang or Engkari River with a tour group, I would often join tour company staff while they ate their lunch at a café in the town of Lachau (see Map 2, Chapter One).[34] Depending on the travel company staff seated around the table, the language in use would change between English, Iban, Hokkien, Hakka, Bidayuh and Malay, and often several times during the one lunch, making it difficult to follow every facet of the conversation. The multilingual environment was also difficult for Sarawak locals working in the longhouse tour industry. For example, while Iban and Bidayuh tour guides usually spoke Iban, English and Malay, they rarely possessed the language skills to understand a conversation between two Chinese guides speaking Hakka. Similarly, few Chinese or Malay guides understood conversations in Bidayuh.

Despite the multilingual environment, it became clear to me over time that three languages are dominant in the longhouse tourism industry: English, Iban and Hokkien. Accordingly, an ideal research methodology would include participant observation by a researcher conversant in at least these three languages. I used English, predominantly, during my research, including when conducting interviews with tour company personnel and with all tourists to longhouses, including non-native English speaking tourists, because they were always accompanied by English-speaking guides. For interviews with longhouse residents I used English and Iban (along with some Malay, when necessary, for clarification). My initial use of Iban was limited but was complemented by the assistance of English-speaking longhouse residents. In the later stages of fieldwork when my Iban had improved, I was less reliant on English-speaking longhouse residents, at least when discussing the familiar topic of tourism. Significantly, I do not speak or understand Hokkien, or the other major Chinese language spoken in the industry, Hakka, and this was a shortcoming in my research. It is clear that these limitations obscured some of the cultural environment in which longhouse tourism takes place and which, if it had been revealed, would undoubtedly have enhanced my understanding of the industry.

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[34] The roadhouse at Lachau, a town half way between Kuching and the Skrang, Lemanak and Engkari rivers, was the regular spot for lunch. Usually several tour groups would stop for lunch at around the same time and tour company

Interaction with tourists

Initially, I planned to keep contact with tourists during my fieldwork to a minimum. This was firstly because it slowed down the process of learning Iban (an important element of my research) by bringing me into constant contact with many people with whom I could easily lapse into conversation in English.

Secondly, I wanted to avoid the tendency on the part of anthropological and other researchers of tourism to focus on the tourists, rather than on the hosts and the host society, regardless of the intended research aim (on Sarawak tourism see Zeppel (1993, 1994 and 1997) and for critical comment see Crick (1994:1-19)). Although rarely noted in anthropological studies of tourism, the researcher often has far more in common with the tourists and their way of life than with the hosts. For example, in my own case, understanding and appreciating an Australian's or European's reactions to their longhouse tour was easier than beginning the difficult undertaking of learning Iban and attempting to understand how longhouse residents felt about tourism (or for that matter trying to comprehend the minutiae of longhouse life) as well as unravelling the broader dynamics of the longhouse tour industry.

As it turned out, my initial decision to keep my interaction with tourists to a minimum was unrealistic. The tourists were often eager to be sociable, presumably because they were on holiday, and would frequently approach me wanting to share their views on 'the longhouse experience' and, if I mentioned my research, to offer their opinion on longhouse tourism. Despite this, I had to resist spending too much time with tourists in order to avoid being swamped with their perspectives at the cost of Iban, tour operator and tour guide voices and narratives.

In any event, residents assumed that, as I was studying tourism (or was myself a long-term tourist), I would want to participate in all tourist 'work', including making polite conversation with tourists on the same topic night after night. Indeed, engaging in polite conversation with tourists was part of the process of learning to be a resident of a

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staff from each tour group would eat lunch together and swap stories about the behaviour of tourists, as well as gossip

tourist longhouse. My role was enhanced by the fact that not all longhouse residents appreciated playing 'the friendly host' all the time, especially because longhouse tour companies do not pay for residents to be 'friendly' (although they advertise friendliness as an aspect of the 'longhouse experience'). Rather, the companies pay for specific activities, such as blowpipe demonstrations and fetching tourists upriver in a longboat (see Chapter Six). A key issue for longhouse residents was that making polite conversation with tourists (usually with a guide assisting as interpreter) was considered part of promoting the longhouse as a good attraction and doing 'good business'. Furthermore, while many residents were adept at making polite conversation with tourists in English (even in broken English in which topics were limited and tourists asked the same questions over and over), it was obvious that having to be unfailingly friendly sometimes wore thin. On a few occasions, I saw residents accuse each other of not doing their fair share of mingling and chatting to tourists.[35] In this context and as my Iban improved, I had little option but to assist with the role of 'friendly host'.

My role in relation to tourists varied with time spent in the field. At the start of fieldwork I had significantly more in common with the tourists than with longhouse residents, tour guides and others involved in the longhouse tour industry. During this period I often accompanied tourists on the activities organised for them during their longhouse stays, including jungle walks and trekking, blowpipe demonstrations, river trips, dancing and so forth (see Chapter Six). As my Iban improved I became more useful and I was frequently coaxed into translating between residents and tourists when a guide was not present or was busy.[36] At times I acted as a 'fill in' tour guide and van driver, which involved engaging directly with tourists, including on occasion assisting with the tour commentary. This enabled me to gain an understanding of longhouse tours from an industry perspective and to broaden my knowledge of the issues faced by guides and tour operators when describing Iban longhouse life to tourists.

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about day-to-day work issues.

[35] English-language skills were also a factor in this; longhouse residents not skilled in English found chatting to tourists more difficult. However, chatting to tourists was not the only way in which residents could contribute to making tourists feel at home. Accusations of laziness were sometimes levelled at residents or *bilik*-families who made no effort to sit out in the *ruai* at night and who were not, therefore, contributing to the 'friendly' longhouse crowd necessary for the rice wine (*tuak*) drinking sessions hosted for tourists.

[36] This became problematic on occasions, such as when a tourist and a longhouse resident attempted to involve me in the bargaining process for the purchase of a handicraft and both parties perceived my involvement as an opportunity to get a good deal (a situation I avoided as much as I could from that time onwards).

Tour guides

A limitation of the thesis that requires acknowledgment is that the discussion does not include a major section devoted to tour guides. While tour guides play an important part in the day-to-day operation of the industry, the thesis is about the current mode of operation of the industry, with a particular focus on how longhouse tours are promoted, the format and style of the tours and the business arrangements between longhouse communities and longhouse tour companies. Tour guides are employees of longhouse tour companies and are not, in most cases, responsible for these business arrangements. Consequently, later chapters include some comment from and discussion of tour guides, but only where it is relevant to the thesis.

Statistical information, other data and library research.

As part of the research a questionnaire was circulated to all Kuching tour companies offering longhouse tours (Appendix B). Tour company personnel were asked to assist by handing out the questionnaire to tourists in the bus or van during their return trip to Kuching. Copies of the questionnaires were distributed at a number of tourist longhouses, major hotels, backpacker-type hostels, cafes frequented by tourists and the roadhouse at Lachau where, as previously noted, most tour groups stop for lunch en route to longhouses.

The questionnaire was not designed as a means of gaining statistical information. Rather, it was intended to collect a further layer of information, on top of my own observations, about tourists' prior knowledge of Sarawak, longhouses and the Iban. The number of questionnaires completed was not high - only 60. Nevertheless, the comments proved to be an excellent source of primary data in the form of written statements by tourists about their perceptions of Iban longhouses and longhouse tours.

A more detailed questionnaire in Iban was distributed to tourist longhouses (Appendix C). The questionnaire was designed with the assistance of residents from Stamang and refined by staff from the Sarawak Museum. Multiple copies were distributed at all

tourist longhouses visited during fieldwork and collected on return trips. The Iban questionnaire, much like the tourist questionnaire, proved useful for gaining primary data in the form of lengthy written statements from longhouse residents, but was not completed by enough residents for any useful statistical information to be generated. Only 37 complete questionnaires were received, mostly from residents of Stamang. However, of those residents who completed the questionnaire, most did so in great detail and in a way they would not otherwise have been able to do if, for example, they were discussing tourism at a longhouse meeting convened in the *ruai* or chatting with me in the *ruai* while observed by other longhouse residents. A limitation of the questionnaire was that it excluded residents with little or no literacy skills, although, in my view, that shortfall was offset by participant observation in each longhouse.

Statistical information on income from tourism and cash flow generated from tourism was collected from tourist longhouse receipt books and company paperwork that accompanied tour groups. The majority of this material was collected at Stamang with the assistance of Tuai Rumah Sonuk and Pengulu Rentap, who granted me access to the longhouse account books. Stamang statistics on annual tourist numbers were provided by AOS. Kuching-based travel companies also provided information on rates paid to longhouse residents for services such as cooking for tourists, blowpipe demonstrations, dancing, gong-playing and so forth. These figures were crosschecked with longhouse residents and, in general, fees and charges related by travel agents matched those being paid to longhouse residents. Where feasible, fees and charges were also checked with tour guides and other tour industry personnel.

Information on the type and price of handicrafts for sale in different tourist longhouses was also collected. This was done by discussing prices with longhouse residents and questioning tourists on prices paid. In some of the more popular tourist longhouses handicrafts were displayed for sale with a price label attached, which provided a basis for estimating cost. The majority of material collected relating to fees, charges and handicrafts is discussed in Chapter Six.

To further enhance my knowledge of the principal field site, Stamang, a census was completed of the current membership of each *bilik*. The *tuai bilik* (the most senior

member and acknowledged spokesperson of the *bilik*-family) was interviewed and the name and sex of each member recorded. The census focussed on *bilik* membership rather than family units because, as noted in Chapter One, the *bilik*-family is the basic family-style building block of a longhouse. This type of information was not collected in other tourist longhouses due to the time constraints of fieldwork.

The majority of tourist longhouses have a guest book in which tourists are encouraged to comment about their stay. Some additional information was collected from these guest books.

Finally, I researched early European accounts of Sarawak and previous studies dealing with Sarawak tourism in the Sarawak Museum library and, later, in Australian libraries.

Chapter 3: The Longhouse Tour Market

> Ethnic tourism often superimposes itself onto a preexisting system of ethnic relations between the locally or nationally dominant group and one or more marginalized, non mainstream groups. The latter become the tourees, and the former become the middlemen in the tourist trade. The locally dominant group is better connected to the global village and possesses the cultural capital useful in managing the tourist-touree encounter (Van Den Berghe 1995:581-582).
>
> The expectations of the tourists on the longhouse tour to see an "unspoiled" and "traditional way of life" run counter to the aspirations of the longhouse dwellers to participate in and partake fully of the benefits of modernisation. The State's commitment to reduce illiteracy through its educational programme also inevitably bring [sic] about change. When we take a boy out of the paddy field and put him in school we cannot expect him to return to the paddy field (Hon 1989: 287).

This chapter has three purposes. The first is to outline and discuss the longhouse tour market, that is, the tourists who take tours to longhouses. I will demonstrate that the majority of tourists on longhouse tours originate from Western countries, are older rather than younger and visit longhouses primarily as part of Asia-wide package tours. Independent travellers, or 'backpackers', rarely take longhouse tours. The discussion draws upon existing research and my own observations made during fieldwork.

The second purpose of the chapter is to examine the existing literature on Borneo and longhouse tourism, in order to identify and explore several themes that arise from it. The literature focuses primarily on the expectations and reactions of tourists to longhouses and on the longhouse tour marketing material, which many researchers argue is significant for shaping and reinforcing tourist expectations. The opinions and conclusions of researchers interested in Sarawak longhouse tour marketing material are examined in detail. In addition, I comment on the issue of authenticity, which appears as a main issue in much of the existing literature, particularly in relation to the future of longhouse tourism.

The third aim of the chapter is to situate the thesis in relation to existing research on longhouse tourism. I argue that there has been little examination of the broader operational context in which longhouse tourism takes place and even less discussion about the impact of tourism on longhouse communities. In part, it is that research gap that this thesis attempts to fill.

However, before proceeding, several preliminary matters require explanation. The first is the question of how tourists are defined and what kind of travel can be labelled 'tourism'. The category 'tourism' is problematic as it is not a distinct practice or role. Rather, the category of 'tourist', and what constitutes tourism, continually shifts and is reframed depending on the nature of social discourse and practice (Rojek and Urry 1997:1; Urry 1990; Boissevain 1996:1-10).

The Western tourism relevant to this thesis draws on the traditions of holiday and travel. Holiday is one of the main traditions of Western civilization and includes the essential condition of a 'break from work', a long history of association with festive games, performance and feasts, and a suspension of normal law and order (as in the tradition of the carnival). The continuity of early holiday and festival traditions is strong in Europe and is a significant part of the experience that European tourists bring to their Asian holidays and incorporate into the European tourism experience in Asia (Boissevain 1996:1-14). Much of the Western tradition of holidaying is relevant to the choice of the Iban longhouse as a tourist destination. The tourism industry takes this into account in the operation of longhouse tours and as part of the field of Western understanding and expectation that the Iban confront in the planning and day-to-day business of longhouse tours.

As Chapter Four makes clear, longhouse tourism is also directly related to the European tradition of travel as exploration and adventure. In more general terms, tourism develops from the European tradition of the Grand Tour, as a journey of pleasure and education to see and enjoy the main sights of the European world and to understand the world and its history and culture (Chard and Langdon 1997). Chapter Four shows that in the nineteenth century 'wild Borneo' became established in Western travel literature and developed as a destination for travel and adventure, which has continued to the present. In addition, it is central to this study that in the second half of the twentieth century travel and the idea of the tour became part of an international tourism industry in which the destination and the itinerary are a product for a market diversified in terms

of categories of travel including package tours, backpacker travel, adventure tours, ecological tours and specialised cultural tours. It will be seen later in this chapter that longhouse tours generally appeal and are marketed to the 'package tour' tourism 'market'.

A second preliminary issue is that, because this thesis focuses on how longhouse tours are promoted and designed and on how longhouse communities are involved in and manage the tours (rather than on the tourists), I do not examine the 'types' of tourists who go on organised longhouse tours and do not attempt to match tourists with a particular existing tourist typology. A great deal of anthropological and other research on tourism refers to tourist 'typologies', particularly those discussed by Smith (1978; 1989) and Cohen (1973; 1979) and examines tourists on the basis of whether they fit the categories provided by those authors.[1] While productive, this approach has tended to result in research that is overly concerned with categorising tourists. With the notable exception of Eide (1998), much of the research and comment on Borneo tourism and longhouse tourism has reflected this tendency (see Caslake (1993) and Zeppel (1994; 1997)).

A third preliminary issue is that this thesis does not focus on discussion of the complexity of individual tourist or Iban responses to longhouse tours, as that would have required an entirely different research methodology. With tourists, I do not make any distinction between those visiting particular longhouses or those touring with particular longhouse tour companies. As later chapters illustrate, there is very little difference in the format and style of longhouse tours offered by the major longhouse tour companies in Sarawak.

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[1] Cohen's typology places tourists into categories entitled 'recreational', 'diversionary', 'experiential', 'experimental' and 'existential' (Cohen 1979:18-35), while Smith classes tourists as either 'explorer', 'elite', 'off-beat', 'unusual', 'incipient mass', 'mass' and 'charter' (Smith 1979:12).

Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, tourists are the individuals who elect to go on a longhouse tour and tourism is the action of undertaking a longhouse tour within the late twentieth century context of international tourism and its products.

The tourists on longhouse tours

Figure 4: Left, tourists departing Mejong longhouse. Right, tourists shopping for handicrafts at Mejong longhouse.

During the year I spent observing tour groups to longhouses it was apparent that many tourists shared common attributes or characteristics. The majority of tourists came from only a handful of countries and were of a similar age. In addition, most tourists had taken the longhouse tour as an addition to, or part of, a larger Asia-wide package tour.

Country of origin

The majority of tourists to longhouses are from wealthy 'Western' nations (primarily from Western Europe). In my observation, the largest number of tourists came from the

Netherlands, followed by Germany, the UK, Sweden and Norway. Tourists from other West European countries such as Italy, Spain and France were common, but fewer in number. Outside Western Europe, tourists from North America and Australasia were the next most frequent, although their numbers were fewer. Inter-Asian tourists (including tourists from Singapore and Brunei) were uncommon,[2] with the exception of a small number of Japanese and, on one occasion, two Taiwanese tourists. I encountered one group of Hong Kong-resident Europeans. I did not observe any domestic tourists from West Malaysia, Sabah or Sarawak at any tourist longhouse throughout the entire year of my fieldwork.[3] The number of tourists from other parts of the world, or of other nationalities, was negligible.

While I cannot comment with any empirical certainty on why certain nationalities of tourists were more common on longhouse tours than others,[4] some interesting comments were made to me on this issue during my fieldwork. For example, tourists from the Netherlands remarked that their awareness of Borneo and Sarawak was influenced by the Dutch colonial history in Kalimantan and that longhouse tours were well marketed in their country (generally as a key component of a broader package tour). Similarly, tourists from the UK told me that their knowledge of Sarawak as a travel destination arose partly because Sarawak was a former British colony. I would also suggest that UK tourists are well represented on longhouse tours because of the extensive business, educational, family and tourism networks that exist between Sarawak, Malaysia as a whole, Singapore and the UK and stem from the Brooke and British colonial period.[5] With Australian tourists there is an argument for proximity and a history of close ties

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[2] Although the number of Indonesian residents visiting Sarawak is quite high (see Appendix D), it is common knowledge in Sarawak that most Indonesians who cross into Sarawak from Kalimantan (at the border crossing at Tebedu) are seeking work or on a short shopping/business trip. There are very few Indonesian 'tourists' (in the commonly-understood Western sense) to Sarawak and I would contend even fewer with the economic resources or inclination to go on a longhouse tour. Similarly, although there is extensive cross-border traffic of Brunei residents (see also Appendix D), they are mainly on business trips or on short holidays and they tend to focus on recreation in Sarawak's major towns, such as Miri and Kuching.

[3] This is not the case in Kuching where domestic travel (for business, pleasure or study) is common.

[4] Furthermore, it should be noted that while 'nationality' is a useful category for collectively describing a population's capacity to travel (relative to factors such as visa requirements, the comparative wealth of nations, government policy and so on) the category 'nation' is by definition broad and homogenising and, therefore, problematic for any analysis of the finer and individual motivations of tourist behaviour.

[5] For example, many Sarawak Chinese send their children to study in UK schools, while the Kuching Hospital maintains a program that allows British medical students to study for a period in Kuching and gain experience with tropical diseases. Another example is UK/Malaysian military cooperation, including exchange programs and joint training.

with Sarawak and Malaysia (for example, Colombo plan scholars, military involvement during and since World War II, trade partnerships etc). Furthermore, in Australia (as well as the UK) high-profile marketing of Malaysia and Sarawak as a travel destination is widespread and tied to discount package tours.

My observation that Europeans are the primary visitors to longhouses is supported by the Sarawak Government's major policy document on tourism, the *Second Tourism Masterplan Study Sarawak 1993* (Clarke and Tourism Research Consultants 1993) (the Masterplan), which notes that 'Europeans were at the forefront of overnight visitors to the inland national parks and longhouses, this contributing to regional development' (Clark et al 1993:12).[6] The Masterplan also comments that Scandinavians comprise 'the largest single market after the UK and Germany' and that they have a 'proven' history of undertaking environmental and package tours' (Clark et al 1993:13).

In addition, the Masterplan makes suggestions about why tourists of certain nationalities favour Sarawak as a travel destination. For example, attempting to account for the high number of German tourists to Sarawak, the Masterplan comments:

> Germans and German speaking countries in Europe are increasingly environmentally aware and strongly attracted by cultural or 'green' nature tourism…The market is dominated by major tour operators (Clark et al 1993:13).

The Masterplan suggests that tourists from Australasia have a 'high environmental awareness and innate interest in the adventure market' and Australians are singled out because of an apparent preference 'for hard and soft adventure travel'. The Masterplan does not explain these terms, although I would identify longhouses tours as 'soft' adventure travel.[7]

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[6] The observations of the Masterplan derive from a year of research conducted by a team of consultants working in cooperation with many sectors of government in Sarawak. The research team initiated government-managed surveys of tourists (for example, a survey of out-bound travellers from Kuching airport) and accessed relevant government records. The Masterplan provides a solid overview of tourism to Sarawak and most sectors of the Sarawak tourism industry at that time.

[7] Weaver's (2001) definition of 'soft' and 'hard' 'ecotourism' indicates that Iban longhouse tours are appropriately defined as 'soft' adventure. Weaver notes, '…the soft segment tends to embark on short ecotourism experiences as

The Masterplan attributes the surprisingly low numbers of North Americans visiting Sarawak (noting that two million North Americans leave for Asia annually) to a depreciating United States (US) dollar, 'lack of information and awareness' of Sarawak and the fact that package tours to Sarawak are not currently part of 'the well established network of adventure wholesalers' that exists within Canada and the US (Clark et al 1993:13-15). As there are no impediments or significant restrictions upon North Americans travelling to Sarawak this view may well be accurate.

While the absence of North Americans on longhouse tours is noticeable, the main issue is that most tourists to longhouses are from the West and from Europe. As later chapters argue (see also the brief summary below of existing research on longhouse tour marketing material), Europe has a longstanding fascination with Borneo as a wild site of the survival of pre-industrial, tribal people and primeval jungle. In my opinion this is a primary reason for the popularity of the tours with Western tourists. Indeed, longhouse tours are marketed overwhelmingly as a product for Westerners. This thesis demonstrates that the product is designed to make a tour to an Iban longhouse a tour to wild Borneo. The Masterplan makes the point in a more general way:

> Sarawak (or, more precisely, "Borneo") has a low but useful level of awareness in major long haul markets...the earliest foreign travellers in Sarawak were nature specialists, adventurers and wildlife enthusiasts. They braved the "unknown" interiors, penetrated upriver, and returned with wild and evocative stories of fearsome peoples, magnificent jungles, rare and exotic plants, and huge and vibrant butterflies. The image of Borneo was implanted in the mind of the western world (Clark et al 1993:10).

An additional reason for the popularity of Borneo as a tourist destination for northern Europeans (such as German and Scandinavian tourists) would seem to be that northern European travellers and writers, such as Bock and Conrad, were major recorders and inventors of the tradition of wild Borneo, and there is a continuing market for texts about adventure in Borneo serviced by northern European writers, the northern European media and northern European museums (see Chapter Four).

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one component of a multi purpose trip. These travellers expect a high level of comfort and services and are more likely to rely on interpretation and mediation to appreciate relevant natural attractions' (Weaver 2001:2).

The fact that there are few, if any, domestic tourists taking longhouse tours seems to be explained by several factors:[8] longhouse tours are a time-intensive and expensive endeavour and domestic travellers (travelling for whatever reason) may well decide to simply go sightseeing or shopping in Kuching, a cheaper and easier option; there are also different local reasons for travel and different local understandings of the world and the exotic; furthermore, domestic travel within Malaysia is often conducted for reasons other than tourism, such as conducting business, visiting relatives and friends and shopping. The Masterplan notes:

> Although figures would indicate several hundred thousand arrivals from the Peninsular annually (more than double international arrivals), most would appear to be business and VFR traffic and not taking advantage of tourism attractions and facilities (Clark et al 1993:5).[9]

With other Asian 'markets', the Masterplan notes that tourists from Singapore, while a very significant market for Sarawak tourism, are mainly interested in 'a relatively short stay and [have] limited interest in attractions beyond Kuching and Damai' (Clark et al 1993:6),[10] while, in relation to Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Korea, the Masterplan observes a link between Asian tourism and shopping:

> Very few of these Asian markets appear interested in a national park or longhouse visit. Except for expatriates and some small, adventure seeking segment in these countries, it seems Sarawak's appeal is somewhat limited...Japan, Taiwan and Korea look for package products with a focus on cities, resorts and shopping...Despite the major importance of the Japanese and other Asian markets to Peninsular Malaysia and their relative proximity, analysis shows that Borneo culture, nature and adventure attractions of Sarawak are not yet appealing to other than very small segments of these markets (Clark etal 1993:M17-M18).

An explanation offered to me by local Malays about why so few of them visit longhouses was that longhouse residents keep pigs, an unsavoury practice in the eyes of many Muslims (many longhouse residents also share this view about why Malays are reluctant to visit longhouses). Furthermore, longhouse tours are primarily designed for and marketed as a product providing access to exotic wild people and it seems clear to me that Asian tourists are not attracted to Borneo as an exotic place (whereas they see Europe, America and Australia and Western culture as exotic). It is possible that they

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[8] My aim here is to comment on why domestic travellers do not go on longhouse tours, rather than to explore at length the shifting and complex context in which Malaysians on a domestic journey become defined, or conceive of themselves, as tourists.

[9] VFR is a tourism industry abbreviation meaning 'visiting friends and relatives'.

[10] Damai is a beach resort area about half an hour from Kuching by car.

do not share the Western preoccupation with evolution and wild Borneo (see Chapter Four).

The issue of wealth is especially relevant to longhouse tourism. International travel demands a relative degree of wealth, and the poverty in which many people live in various countries makes the notion of 'taking time off' or travelling for leisure (i.e. being a tourist) a foreign and, at times, nonsensical notion.[11] As Van Den Berghe, writing on ethnic tourism in the Mexican town of San Cristóbal notes:

> Tourists frequently have higher status than their hosts, if only because they can afford to be there. This is especially true of First World tourism in Third World countries, but is also obvious in much internal tourism within rich countries. Even the seemingly "poor" counter culture tourist on a shoestring budget enjoys the enormous luxury of leisure (Van Den Berghe 1996:18).

The general economic difference between the tourists and the Iban hosts of the longhouse tour is perhaps the most significant of the differences between the Iban and the tourists who visit them. As one of Malaysia's poorest ethnic groups, for most residents of Iban longhouse communities, tourism is economically impossible[12] and many Iban providers of tourism have no personal experience of conventional Western national or international tourism (although, as previously discussed, the Iban custom of *bejalai* recognises the value of travel for education, adventure and to seek income). Van Den Berghe makes a useful comment in the context of Mexican ethnic tourism:

> This is obviously not to say that all tourists are wealthier than all locals, but nearly all tourist host interaction takes the form of an unequal relationship between consumers of sights, spectacles, and services, and those who provide these commodities either simply by being there, by making a spectacle of themselves, or by making a living from tourism. Egalitarian interaction between tourists and hosts is rare (Van Den Berghe 1996:18).[13]

Furthermore, because of the cycle of rice farming and semi-subsistence living patterns in most longhouses communities, including tourist longhouses, leisure time of the kind that tourists have during a visit to a longhouse (particularly paid holiday leave) is not

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[11] This inequity was the main subject and motivation for some of the early academic critiques of mass and small-scale tourism, such as those by Turner and Ash (1975), MacCannell (1976) and Nash (1978).

[12] I am unaware of the circumstances of Iban longhouse residents in Brunei and Indonesia.

[13] Dennis O'Rourkes' 1987 film *Cannibal Tours* about organised tour groups to villages along the Sepik River in Papua New Guinea demonstrates this point vividly.

available and a concept not readily understood by residents. In my observation the most common form of travel undertaken by longhouse residents is to visit relatives as part of looking for and undertaking work (following the Iban custom of *bejalai*) and to access services, such as hospitals and schools, which are available only in regional centres like Kuching, Sri Aman and Sibu.

Age group

In my experience, the majority of tourists to longhouses were aged between 35 and 65. During fieldwork, I saw very few tourists under 35, the exception being children accompanied by adults. Furthermore, I observed that very few independent travellers or 'backpackers' undertook longhouse tours[14] and I am of the view that the market for longhouse tours does not substantially include backpackers.[15] Consideration of why backpackers are not prominent contributes to an understanding of the industry.

First, many independent travellers make their own way to Kuching by bus or via an independently-booked flight, rather than by way of an air ticket/accommodation package. Once in Kuching, if a traveller is interested in taking a longhouse tour, the only tours available for purchase are from the shopfronts or hotel sales desks of local longhouse tour operators. Tours bought in this way (instead of as part of a wider package tour) are expensive and beyond the budget of most backpackers.[16] Among the

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[14] I define backpackers following Murphy (2001) who describes them as 'young budget-minded tourists who exhibit a preference for inexpensive accommodation, an emphasis on meeting other people (locals and outsiders), an independently organized and flexible itinerary, longer rather than brief vacations, and an emphasis on informal and participatory activities' (Murphy 2001:50-51). A further note here is that academic literature on tourism and travel uses various terms to refer to, and discuss variations of, backpacker-style tourism. For example as Hampton notes (1998), there is a variety of literature that refers to 'wanderers', 'budget travellers', 'drifters' 'tramping' 'craft tourism', 'youth tourists' and 'backpackers' (Hampton 1998:641).

[15] While the *Intrepid Guide to South East Asia* (1994) (which is published by the Lonely Planet company) and the 1999 and 1996 editions of *Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei: A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit* (both of which are among the most well-known backpacker travel guides available for the region), include sections on visiting longhouses, each publication makes only passing mention of longhouse tours. The focus is on recommendations and hints for those who wish to travel independently to a longhouse in the hope that they will be invited to stay.

[16] The average price for a one-night two-day longhouse tour purchased from the shopfront of a longhouse tour company in Kuching (such as those situated along Jalan Main Bazaar described in Chapter Two) is around $300-400 MYR. Yet, if, for example,the same length tour was purchased in Australia as part of a package tour, it would cost around $200 MYR (AUD $100) (see, for example, the 'Skrang River Safari', Malaysian Golden Holidays Brochure April 2001).

many backpackers I met in Kuching the few that considered taking such a tour complained that the cost was prohibitive.

Secondly, many independent travellers (at least those I encountered in Kuching) were simply not interested in going on a longhouse tour, because they perceived longhouse tours as 'too commercial', 'inauthentic' and not providing the style of Borneo experience they were seeking. A large proportion of such travellers were focussed on 'going up river' with plans to go 'as far as possible' to a find a more 'authentic' or 'non-touristy' longhouse with the idea that they would be invited to stay (a backpacker variation on the theme of traditional and authentic hospitality that is part of longhouse tourism).[17] 'Authenticity' and 'the traditional' are key features of many types of tourism and tourist experience. Hutnyk, in his study of backpacker lore, tourism and representation in Calcutta comments on backpacker concern with 'authentic' experience in relation to the self aware, reflective and alternative nature of backpacker travel (Hutnyk 1996):

> Many, if not most, of the backpacking travellers who pass through Calcutta are not unreflective about their situation in travelling. Their reflections reveal the presence of a form of popular alternative critique of travel, a perspective on the ethical problems of otherness, and some recognition that their experience is filtered through the technological aids of perception that they carry with them. Their critique of tourism manifests itself in (a) the search for 'authentic' experiences; (b) nostalgia for the days when such and such a place was not so well known; and (c) 'of course I'm doing it differently' stories (Hutnyk 1996:9).

In my view, the perspectives of the independent travellers that I met in Kuching reflect a more general desire to seek a unique and personal experience of a destination or culture, and they generally believe group tours represent the antithesis of that kind of tourism (Hampton 1998:639-643). Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995), writing on Riley's 1988 study *Road Culture of International Long-Term Budget Travellers*, comment on this opposition to mass tourism:

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[17] Presumably because these views are extremely common among backpackers, both the 1996 and 1999 editions of *Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei: A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit* include a special section attempting to debunk them. The section is called 'The Iban Greet the New Century' and begins with the warning 'The Iban are likely to come as a shock to anyone who imagines them as happy natives marooned from the 20^{h} century deep in the jungles of Borneo' (Rowthorn et al 1999:398). On the opposite page under the heading 'Visiting a Longhouse', the guide cautions, 'As you go further upriver, the longhouses will not necessarily be more traditional' and, '...traditional customs, beliefs and festivals are still practised, but the jungle *is* part of the 21st century – you may spend days getting to a longhouse only to find everyone sitting around watching CNN on satellite TV' (Rowthorn et al 1999:399).

> In analysing the characteristics and distinguishing features of the longterm budget travellers, Riley noted that a subculture with distinctive values had emerged for this group. Respect was given to individuals who managed to live very cheaply, visit remote and exotic locations, and endure hardships to reach the special places. Such travellers tended to perceive a role difference between themselves and mass tourists who were viewed as seeking unadventurous, comfortable Westernized holidays (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995:826).

This prejudice of backpackers against mass tourism and package tours seems to be a significant reason for their lack of interest in longhouse tours and underlines the fact that longhouse tourism primarily involves package tours that are advertised to appeal to the mass tourism market.

Finally, there seems to be a perception (which is, coincidentally, accurate) amongst backpackers that guided longhouse tours (and guided tours generally) are a product servicing older, unadventurous, tourists. The backpackers I met in Kuching and other regional centres were younger than most tourists on longhouse tours by as much as 15 years. These observations match Hampton's (1998) definition of backpackers and Thuens' (1991) definition of youth tourism, as explained by Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995):

> Thuens (1991) defines youth tourism as the young and young adults aged between 15 and 25 traveling alone or in a group composed of representatives of the same or similar age cohort....Modern youth tourism it is proposed does not make use of the pre-arranged services of a tour operator and has limited group size (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995:829).

Package tours and the longhouse tour

Most longhouse tours are provided as a specialised part of broader, Malaysia-wide, package tours or similar out-bound tour 'specials' of the type commonly sold in the Western travel industry. For example, Malaysian Airlines offers a package from various Australian cities to Kuala Lumpur that includes a free flight to Kuching and (for an additional fee) two nights accommodation in the Kuching Hilton and a one-night, two-day longhouse tour.[18]

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[18] In some cases the package tour may be Asia-wide, such as from Hong Kong, to the Philippines, then to Malaysia via Sabah, followed two days later by a flight to Sarawak and a longhouse tour.

When tourists purchase package tours in their own country the particular longhouse they will visit is predetermined as part of the package. The usual business arrangement between tourist home country and the Malaysian tour industry sees the longhouse tour, like other services, such as hotels, regional airlines and hire care companies, contracted to a local longhouse tour operator, who determines the longhouse visited.[19]

Most package tour products do not provide tourists with a choice of longhouse. In fact, most tour brochures do not specify the name of the longhouse or the name of the tour operator providing the tour (although in some cases the name of the river on which the longhouse is situated is mentioned). Most of the tourists with whom I spoke had chosen to undertake a longhouse tour as an optional 'tick-the-box' part of a wider package tour.[20] Indeed, most of the tourists I met in Kuching who had been on a longhouse tour could not name the longhouse community they had visited and many did not know the name of the nearest town or part of Sarawak in which the longhouse was located. In addition, since my fieldwork, I have found this to be the case with every person I have met who has been on a longhouse tour.

The holiday packages of which longhouse tours form a part generally include accommodation in up-market hotels such as the Holiday Inn and the Kuching Hilton, both before and after the tour. This creates a dramatic contrast between the hotel environment and the rustic jungle setting of a tourist longhouse. For the tourist, in the space of several hours the friendly, well-dressed, polite, English-speaking local staff working in Kuching's up-market hotels are replaced with Iban longhouse residents who have limited English and are dressed in a combination of 'traditional' clothes and worn work clothes for farm work and ordinary life in a longhouse. This sudden contrast accentuates the 'nativeness' and 'wildness' of longhouse residents. Indeed, tourists

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[19] These arrangements are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

[20] In this kind of tourism market longhouse tour companies do not win a greater share of the market by having, for example, the best window display, the most engaging brochure, or animated web site as a means of increasing the numbers of individual tourists who take tours (although it certainly helps). In fact, longhouse tour companies achieve market success by using their marketing material to sell their tours to tour companies operating in other countries (these are commonly referred to as 'out-bound' tour operators, a term that is explained in greater detail in Chapter Five). This ensures that their product becomes part of global travel networks and package tours. For example, a common topic when I met with longhouse tour company managers or owners in Kuching was the issue of which longhouse tour companies had the most contracts with out-bound operators, including from which countries.

frequently commented that the longhouse visit was 'a shock' when compared with where they had just come from.

In 1996-2001, a longhouse tour generally lasted for two days and one night. From the tourists' point of view it was presented as a tour to visit 'traditional' longhouse people in a 'traditional longhouse'. The itinerary began with a trip upriver to a traditional riverside longhouse built of wood, set amongst rice farms and pepper crops in a wild jungle and decorated with curious 'native' artefacts including skulls gathered by 'Iban headhunters'. At the longhouse the Iban gave a traditional welcome, held a feast, danced in traditional costumes and gave demonstrations of traditional activities, such as an Iban 'warrior' firing a blowpipe.[21]

For the tourists one of the main attractions of a longhouse tour would seem to be that it is an adventure in the wild which is also safe and comfortable and, in spite of the confrontation with such a different way of life, it involves patterns of travel that connect it with more familiar travel experiences, such as staying in a major hotel like the Kuching Hilton. In this sense, the absence of American tourists is a contradiction in a tourist industry that is in part an Asian recreation of American consumerism for a largely northern European market. As Cohen (1973) notes, referring to 'Malaysian Jungle' tours in 1972:[22]

> Some of these tours still preserve the flavour of real adventure; however, as they shade off into out-of-the-beaten-track but conventional, mass tours, they become what a German student of tourism aptly described as "adventureless adventures" (Cohen 1973:96).

What is more certain is that some tourists are prepared to see the longhouse tour as a genuine cultural experience, a higher kind of tourism, or a kind of popular anthropological study of 'primitive' people who have generously made themselves available to tourism.[23] In other words, in spite of the dominance of the package tour model, longhouse tourism provides for a wide range of responses from tourists.

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[21] The tour program of a longhouse tour will be described in detail in Chapter Six.
[22] Cohen does not state in which part of Malaysia these tours were conducted.
[23] For example, at Stamang I met a tourist who said that when he chose his tour in Holland he was told there was an anthropologist at Stamang and that was one reason for his choice.

In my experience of tourists on longhouse tours, the majority were on their first trip to Malaysia and Sarawak. Furthermore, many of them also said it was their first trip to South-East Asia. This may go some way to explaining why such tourists choose to take group longhouse tours and why, more generally, they choose package tours as a means of visiting Sarawak. During my fieldwork, a number of tourists provided me with a range of explanations about why they had opted for a package tour. Some stated that it was because they were unfamiliar with Malaysia, some said it was because of limited time available for holidays, while others said the tour was good value for money as an airfare/accommodation/sightseeing package. The Masterplan acknowledged the same phenomenon, stating, 'First time visitors to Sarawak had a greater propensity to take some form of group tour or package tour (Clarke et al 1993:82)'.

Longhouse tours have a role as part of the broader package tours in that they provide a short, reasonably comfortable, 'adventureless adventure' in 'Borneo' – a recognisable 'adventure' label that has considerable standing when flagged as the location for a traveller's tale.[24] Tour operators are aware that most tourists to longhouses want 'adventure' on a limited scale and with limited inconvenience. The marketing of the tours in turn creates a bond of desire among the tourists – desire for limited adventure of the kind offered by a package longhouse tour.

Previous research on Sarawak and longhouse tourism

Overview

In 1975 Mr (now Dr) Peter Kedit became the first person to research longhouse tourism in Sarawak when he surveyed residents of Skrang River longhouses about their views

[24] This was certainly the case in my own experience. After returning from fieldwork I found that merely mentioning Borneo was often all that was necessary for a mediocre traveller's tale to be listened to with far more attention and wonderment than it deserved.

on tourism as part of a research project initiated by the Sarawak Museum.[25] The research from this first field trip was never published, although in 1980 he produced a report for the Sarawak Museum based on his 1975 work and intended for use by the Sarawak State Government in tourism industry planning.[26] In 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992 Dr Kedit followed this earlier research with brief return trips to Skrang River tourist longhouses. The results of his later research were published in a collection of papers from the second Biennial Borneo Research Council Conference held in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah in 1992 (Kedit 1993).[27]

Kedit's research has provided useful insights into long-term trends in the longhouse tourism industry. For example, his surveys show that in 1975 Skrang River longhouse residents felt they were underpaid for their tourism work, while 14 years later, in 1989, this was still their view (Kedit 1980b:26, 1993:55). His work reveals that the basic format and design of longhouse tours (for example, dance performances, blowpipe demonstrations and jungle walks) is essentially unchanged since 1975. In addition, in both studies Kedit recommended the need for government intervention in the industry to protect against the 'commercialisation' of 'Iban culture', which he saw as detrimental to the tourist experience of longhouse life and as impacting on the long-term viability of the industry. He has recommended other measures to ensure that longhouse communities receive a greater share of the economic reward from organised tourism (Kedit 1980b 28-29, 1993:57-58). The limitation of Kedit's work is that it relies largely on responses to survey questions and there is very little discussion that contextualises his survey method or the responses of the residents he interviewed (the 1980 report includes some limited discussion based on participant observation). Further, his publications do not include any extensive analysis of his survey results (unless his recommendations are taken as analysis) and, consequently, his work lacks complexity. I refer to Kedit's research in more detail in later chapters.

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[25] Dr Kedit was the staff anthropologist at the Sarawak Museum at that time.
[26] Dr Kedit was unable to finalise his research for five years because he was overseas in Australia on study leave (Kedit 1980b:preface).
[27] On the basis of his 1989 to 1992 research, Dr Kedit also produced an official report for the Sarawak Museum and Sarawak State Government, however, I was not granted permission to quote from this source.

To my knowledge, there was no other academic research on Iban longhouse tourism in the period between Dr Kedit's initial research in 1975 and his Sarawak Museum report in 1989 and certainly not any that involved fieldwork in longhouse communities. In 1989 the *Sarawak Museum Journal* published a paper by Denis Hon, the then Tourism Coordinator in the Tourism Division of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Sarawak, entitled *Culture Designed for Tourism.* Hon's paper focussed on Iban longhouse tourism on the Skrang River and presented strong opinions on perceived problems of the industry and its future direction. In particular, Hon was of the view that tourists clearly wanted to visit traditional longhouse communities and that the industry faced a crisis because of the dwindling number of longhouse communities that matched with tourist expectations. However, Hon failed to outline whether his observations and recommendations were founded on original fieldwork, and, as his paper does not contain a bibliography, it is impossible to tell what, if any, secondary sources were used (his paper is discussed in more detail below).

Since 1990 academic research on tourism in Borneo has intensified and particular attention has been paid to tourism in Sarawak and longhouse tours, but the quantity of scholarly writing on longhouse tourism in Sarawak is still not large. The primary contributors to the field of study are Caslake (1993), Clarke et al (1993), Kadir Din (1995), Eide (1998), King (1993c), Kedit (1980b, 1994), Sangin et al (2000), Saunders (1993) and Zeppel (1993, 1994, 1997).[28]

Approaches to the research and some common themes

An examination of the existing literature reveals several points of note. First, a considerable amount of the research about Sarawak and longhouse tourism has involved quantitative research focussed on compiling data tables from longhouse resident responses to questionnaires (such as Kadir Din 1995; Sangin et al 2000) rather than a qualitative approach involving sustained participant observation. Consequently, there

has been less detailed discussion of the complex issues surrounding longhouse residents' involvement with organised tourism than might be expected. Furthermore, with the exception of the material on tourists, most existing material avoids detailed discussion of the major groups participating in longhouse tourism, such as tour operators, longhouse residents and tour guides. A notable exception is Eide's (1998) study, which is grounded in participant observation and, to a lesser extent, Zeppel's (1994) work, although her material is heavily reliant on statistical analysis of questionnaires and other statistical sources, and is primarily about tourists.

Secondly, most of the research, whether in favour of tourism to longhouses and supportive of the industry (such as Clarke et al 1993; Zeppel 1994; Kadir Din 1995) or wary of the supposed benefits of tourism and thus more critical of the way the industry operates (such as Kedit 1980b; Eide 1998; Ong 2000), has raised concerns about the sustainability and future direction of longhouse tourism in its current form. However, there are conflicting views in the research about precisely what is wrong and what should be done. For example, Kedit's primary concern in 1980 seemed to be the 'over-commercialisation' of the industry, which he said was in danger of 'killing the goose that lay the golden egg' (Kedit 1980b:29). Others, such as Hon, have gone further, suggesting that longhouse tourism is unsustainable in its current form because, over time, longhouse communities become 'less and less authentic' and, therefore, less attractive to tourists (Hon 1989:287-288). Hon stresses that authenticity is central to the industry:

> The possibility cannot be ruled out that with the passage of time, the longhouse and its way of life may become less and less authentic. Even today, an inbound tour operator has discarded Skrang [Skrang River longhouses involved with organised tourism] for what he considers to be a more genuine and traditional longhouse on the Lemanak River…Authenticity and traditionalism are what tourists look for in our cultural heritage and if these cannot be found in the normal setting, they can still be reproduced in well planned parks or cultural villages. (Hon 1989: 287).

Similarly, Kadir Din (1995) suggests that modernisation and development will eventually result in the 'disappearance' of longhouse life:

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[28] The works listed above are all English-language material. The field would be greater if Indonesian and Malay-language publications were considered.

> The disappearance of the longhouse and its way of life in the future is not only a possibility but can become a reality when the local population is fully involved in the development and modernisation process which may lead them to decide that community life in a longhouse is no longer suitable. This aspect of the local population's culture which attracts thousands of tourists each year need not be the norm in order to provide tourists with the 'actual' experience which they sought in an indigenous society. The Skrang area can be designated a Dayak Heritage Park. Its natural setting with over 20 longhouses, river safaris, jungle trekking, fishing expedition, planting of padi etc is perfect for the tourist who seeks traditional and indigenous culture, nature and adventure (Kadir Din 1995: 71).

In contrast, Eide takes issue with the marketing and design of longhouse tours, arguing that a misleading view of longhouse life is promoted and staged for tourists. He sees this as preventing the development of a longhouse tour product that reflects a truer version of contemporary Iban longhouse life (Eide 1998:148-150). Zeppel also sees difficulty with the current state of longhouse tours and shares some of Eide's views about the way tours are marketed and designed, although her vision for the longer-term sustainability of the industry is generally positive (Zeppel 1994:278-290).

Thirdly, as mentioned earlier, the existing literature focuses predominantly on two main aspects of the longhouse tour industry – the tourists (for example see Caslake 1993; Clarke et al 1993; Kadir Din 1995; Zeppel 1993, 1997) and the promotional material produced to market the tours (for example, see Caslake 1993; Clarke et al 1993; King 1993a; 1993c; Zeppel 1994).

Many of the major studies have been largely concerned with recommendations for the development and expansion of the longhouse industry for the benefit of tourists and tour operators (although some highlight problems for longhouse residents). Clarke et al (1993), Kadir Din (1995), Zeppel (1994) and parts of Kedit's work (1980b) demonstrate this tendency. A further possibility is that, for Western scholars in particular, tourists have been a focus because they are more accessible research subjects than Iban longhouse residents (in terms of language, eagerness to share views and so on).

I have the impression that, like my own interest in longhouse tours, the notion of critically examining the conventions surrounding how the West has understood and represented Borneo, and how such conventions are utilised in marketing techniques for

tourism, has appealed to other scholars. A key theme in much of the research conducted into the marketing material used to promote Sarawak longhouse tourism is that there is a strong connection, not only between marketing and the choice of a tour, but also between the marketing material and how tourists experience the tours. This viewpoint underscores much of my own analysis in the following chapters and is one basis from which key arguments of this thesis are developed. Accordingly, the following section provides further examination of the existing research on marketing material.

Research on marketing material used to promote Borneo, Sarawak and longhouse tours

In the work of Backhaus (2000), Caslake (1993), Eide (1998), King (1993c), Saunders (1993) and Zeppel (1993, 1994, 1997), there is general agreement that tourist knowledge of Sarawak, Iban longhouses and Borneo is greatly influenced by the promotional material about Sarawak and longhouse tours.

Furthermore, there is broad agreement that many tourists imagine their destination in terms influenced by the stereotyped and exaggerated manner in which writers, filmmakers, travel marketeers and other travellers have represented Sarawak and Borneo in the past. For example, Saunders (1993), writing on early accounts of Borneo by Western travellers, suggests that present-day tourists to Borneo 'expect' a destination as it was imagined and presented in the West in the 1920s because, he argues, this is when the popular, Western 'tourist' vision of Borneo became widely established.[29] Saunders also believes that contemporary travel brochures continue to market a 1920s vision of Borneo:

> It is clear that by the 1920s the images of Borneo were those of the tourist brochures of today. Once these images were established, then travellers to Borneo were going to expect to see them, be they orang-utans, Dayak headhunters, longhouses, Brunei's Kampong Ayer, Bajau Horsemen or whatever. For the tourists these are the images that define Borneo and set it apart from other

[29] Saunders sees the 1920s as the critical period for the establishment of a 'tourist vision' of Borneo because 1922 saw the first publication of mass-produced travel books, such as Elizabeth Mershon's 'With the Wild Men of Borneo' (Mershon 1922). In the following chapter I argue for a more complex understanding of how the popular Western view of 'Borneo' became widely established.

> places. These are what make Borneo unique. They are what tour operators, tour guides, travel agents and local residents guarantee they will see (Saunders 1993:25).

Backhaus's recent paper (2000) *The Traveller's Gaze: Ecotourism in National Parks of Malaysian Borneo* (which discusses ecotourism in Sabah and Sarawak, but does not look specifically at Iban longhouse tourism) also suggests that Western tourists expect to experience the stereotypical 'Borneo' found in Western popular culture. Backhaus notes:

> In western countries the expression 'Borneo' itself is a sign which stands for jungle, nature, adventure as well as for (indigenous) culture. Western tourists who visit Sabah and Sarawak mostly have this diffuse image of green, damp jungles full of unknown creatures where hidden tribes live secluded from outside the modern world (Backhaus 2000: 444-445).

Similarly, Caslake (1993:80), writing specifically on Sarawak longhouse tourism, observes that longhouse tour promotional material stresses 'the unknown, the other; exploiting the dangers and uncertainties of the jungle and the simple and traditional people – far from the complex and modern self'.[30] He notes that 'many [tourists] expressed their surprise at how 'Westernised' the Iban were, having been given a false impression from the literature' (Caslake 1993:85). The Masterplan adds an interesting perspective:

> There are, however, signs of a mis-match [sic] of expectations among some tourists about what their longhouse visit might entail. Here the role of historical images and current promotion is pivotal in shaping visitor expectations (Clarke et al 1993:213).

King, who has written extensively on Bornean ethnography as well as on tourism in Malaysia, Sarawak, Borneo and wider South-East Asia takes a similar view (see King 1978, 1992, 1993a, 1993c, 1999a, 1999b, and Hitchcock et al 1993). With some caution he suggests a direct causal link between marketing for Sarawak and longhouse tourism and 'host-guest interaction' during tours:

> 'What we certainly do have are examples of the images which foreign tourists are encouraged to construct from the tourism literature on Malaysia in general and Borneo in particular. It is problematical to establish direct links between these images and the nature of the host-guest interaction. But my assumption is that there is such a connection (King 1993c:35).

The connection between promotional images of Sarawak and longhouse tours and the expectations of tourists receives most attention in the work of Zeppel (1994) and Eide

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[30] Caslake visited Stamang for a period of two weeks in 1992.

(1998).[31] For Zeppel it underpins her analysis of how longhouse tourists experience 'authenticity', while it is a pivotal point of Eide's thesis that the longhouse tour industry faces future difficulties in finding appropriate 'traditional' longhouses unless the market image is revised. Zeppel's and Eide's research on longhouse tours is significant because it is the first involving any lengthy fieldwork since Kedit's in 1975 and 1989.[32] Eide's research includes an analysis of questionnaires completed by tourists and Zeppel's work also draws on survey results.[33]

Eide makes the observation that the images contained in the promotional material for Sarawak and longhouse tours are largely historical (or staged historical scenes) and he notes that 'historical images to a large degree serve to reinforce [tourists'] established views and prejudices' (Eide 1998:53). In addition, when analysing the responses of tourists who participated in one of his surveys, he comments:

> Many tourists had specific expectations of encountering primitive, simple, original places and peoples. In reference to tourists' motivations for undertaking a Borneo trip, the questionnaires show that they emerge by and large from a desire to experience a way of living which corresponds to many 'typical images' of Borneo' (Eide 1998:52).

As evidence Eide notes that 73% percent of the tourists he surveyed stated that they had gained their knowledge of Borneo from travel brochures and 72% had expectations that the longhouse they visited would be 'primitive, simple, original and traditional' (Chapter Five demonstrates that this is a key feature of Sarawak and longhouse tour marketing). Furthermore, 10% of tourists stated that they expected the Iban to be 'friendly' which, to some extent, is also a reflection of the content of tourist brochures, as the brochures frequently refer to the Iban as 'friendly hosts' (or other similar phrases) (Eide 1998:30-51). In fact, as this thesis shows, the tradition of wild Borneo includes both an understanding of the Iban as generous and hospitable jungle people and the idea of Iban headhunters and 'wild men', a contrast which becomes increasingly extreme (and beyond popular interrogation) as the tradition develops in the twentieth century.

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[31] Eide's research was undertaken as part of a Masters thesis at the University of Olso, Norway, while Zeppel's was for a Doctoral thesis at the University of North Queensland, Australia. Both researchers spent time at Stamang, the principal longhouse for my research, as well as in some of the other tourist longhouses discussed in this thesis.

[32] Zeppel's work draws on numerous trips made over twelve months in 1993, while Eide's research involved around six months continuous fieldwork in 1995 and 1996.

Eide shows that tourists react to their experience of the longhouse tour with what he terms 'reverse ethnocentrism', a process whereby tourists interpret positively elements of longhouse and Iban life that are different from their own (for example, 'traditional' dancing, tattoos, unfamiliar food etc), as these elements fit with what they expect to see on a tour. In contrast, elements of the longhouse and Iban society that reflect 'Western' living standards and behaviour (such as mass-produced consumer goods) are perceived as negative and indicative of a 'spoiled' attraction (Eide 1998:73). As Eide notes:

> ...we might say that encounters between Iban and tourists indeed transforms the typical 'tourist images, views and prejudices', but only to include changes from one kind of prejudice (expectation of primitiveness) to another one (expectation of development towards 'us'). Thus, because the travel industry presents an image of Borneo which remains largely unchanged, the contemporary tourist is not far removed from the colonial explorer in his or her attitudes (Eide 1998:79-80).

Eide's analysis divides tourists into two categories: those who feel that the Iban must remain 'as they are' and those who believe that the Iban should progress towards a 'Western' version of modernisation and development. He provides useful examples of comments that tourists made after their tours:

> Surprised about the TV, stereo, guitar etc. On the one hand they (Iban) follow the 20th century, but on the other hand (house, hygiene) they are still behind.[34]

> Their society, while perfectly suited to a different time, is not salvageable into these times. Seeing the Iban longhouse was like moving back in time. Their existence is closer to the cave man than our shopping centre society. The deliberate pace and rhythm of the society was fascinating, if not surprising. Perhaps the melting of the new and the old was a surprise (Eide 1998:77-79).[35]

Eide's key point is that, whether positive or negative, tourists' responses are linked to the marketing for the tours (which, in turn, echoes longstanding 'typical' Western views about Borneo and its indigenous non-Muslim peoples). Eide concludes that 'marketing

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[33] Zeppel does not provide a figure for the overall number of tourists surveyed. However, from the results listed in various tables it would appear that in some cases up to 250 tourists were surveyed.

[34] Ironically with comments of this kind (which I also heard quite frequently), tourists rarely considered that many of the consumer goods they were surprised that the Iban possessed were made or assembled in Malaysia. Furthermore, in my observation, the fact that many tourists did not consider their presence in the longhouse as a sign of the longhouse community's links to the global economy is an example of the extent to which tourists were capable of deceiving themselves about (or chosing to ignore) these issues.

[35] In my experience at Stamang and in other tourist longhouses, comments of this kind were not uncommon and the above is not a particularly extreme example.

discourses have real consequences in social practice because these discourses produce certain types of 'knowledge' and shape visitor expectations' (Eide 1998:150).[36]

Eide also takes up the theme of authenticity by suggesting that tourists seek verification of 'authenticity' while on a longhouse tour. He sees this 'quest for authenticity' as linked to 'verification of marketed representation' (Eide 1998:53,79). My own research supports Eide's view in some ways and confirms the importance of tourism marketing. However, my analysis goes further by showing that the design of longhouse tours, the marketing of the tours and tourists' responses to them occur within and are influenced by a powerful tradition of knowledge influencing how Borneo and Bornean peoples are imagined and understood by the West (see Chapter Four). In addition, I demonstrate how the current mode of operation of the industry sees tour operators in the commanding position of defining and selecting longhouse communities for tourism that are a material and social reflection of the dominant paradigm. A major focus is how this explains the nature of the relationships between the tour operators, the Iban and the tourists.

Authenticity is a major focus of Zeppel's (1994) thesis. She focuses on how tourists experience, define and measure authenticity during tours to Iban longhouses. Zeppel's discussion and conclusions are largely focussed on how the longhouse tour industry can better serve tourists.[37] She defines authenticity as a socially-derived and variable concept and assumes that it can be clearly identified and charted via an analysis of tourists' responses to longhouse tours and key local attractions such as the Sarawak Museum (Zeppel 1994:283). Zeppel classifies tourist reactions into two categories: 'situational' and 'behavioural'. She says that 'situational' reactions relate to the unique surroundings and situations encountered by tourists when on a longhouse tour and

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[36] I witnessed an extreme example of this when a group of tourists arrived at Mejong longhouse on the Skrang River and expressed their dismay to the assistant *Tuai Rumah* (and several other longhouse residents present) that the Iban used paper and coin currency and no longer traded for beads.

[37] Zeppel's thesis was submitted in the discipline of 'Material Culture and Tourism Studies' and her research goals and conclusions reflect that. Zeppel does not take a holistic approach to examining longhouse tourism and, although there is some discussion of longhouse residents' views, the issue of Iban agency in not seriously considered.

'behavioural' reactions refer to tourists having a 'closer experience' with longhouse residents (Zeppel 1994:227).

Using this framework Zeppel develops the argument that while on a tour tourists experience authenticity on two levels: first, through recognising key 'cultural markers' such as trophy skulls, 'traditional' wooden longhouses, costumed dancers and so forth; and secondly, through interacting in a meaningful way with their hosts:

> The marketing and presentation of Iban culture provides a framework for tourist action by establishing markers of authenticity and worthwhile travel experiences...Tourists negotiate a meaningful social response to authenticity based either on Iban cultural markers, or by self motivated interaction with Iban people (Zeppel 1994:283).

Underpinning this view is what Zeppel identifies as a clear relationship between tourist responses and behaviour during longhouse tours and the style and content of the promotional material used to advertise tours. In an article published in 1997, based on her Doctoral research, Zeppel suggests that:

> Tourist marketing of Iban longhouse tours in Sarawak and Australian travel brochures clearly revolves around presenting a colourful and exotic image of Iban culture in Borneo...This author suggests that the marketing of Iban culture influences how tourists interact with Iban people in a guided longhouse tour (Zeppel 1997:91).

In her thesis Zeppel notes that tourists become disappointed if the longhouse and community are not representative of the 'markers' conveyed in the promotional marketing material, while on the other hand, if tourists recognise markers during their tour (and have meaningful interpersonal experiences) they are more likely to value the longhouse community as 'authentic' and judge the tour positively. Zeppel provides considerable evidence to support her views, including survey material collected from tourists who visited the longhouses Stamang, Serubah and Nanga Kasit (Ulu) from which she notes that 95% of tourists 'affirmed the importance of seeing traditional Iban longhouse culture' (Zeppel 1994:215).

As part of her survey Zeppel asked tourists to comment on features of Iban 'traditional' culture commonly presented in travel marketing. The topics she used were 'the

longhouse', 'Iban lifestyle', 'Iban dances', and 'ceremonial costume'.[38] With respect to 'the longhouse' Zeppel found that the manner in which tourists ranked how 'traditional' the longhouse was coincided with the imagery presented to them in brochures. A wooden roof and less modern building materials were considered to be more traditional than, for example, a tin or corrugated iron roof and the use of pre-fabricated materials in the construction of *bilik* or the *ruai*. Tourists considered Stamang longhouse the most traditional while Nanga Kasit (Ulu) and Serubah were considered less so (Zeppel 1994 216-218). In the category 'Iban lifestyle' Zeppel concluded that the 'majority of tourists surveyed about longhouse tours agreed that the Iban still followed a traditional lifestyle' and, in line with her general argument, she states that this influenced how tourists gauged the 'authenticity' of their longhouse experience (Zeppel 1994:218). Tourists assessed the 'dancing' and 'ceremonial costume' cultural markers in a similar way (Zeppel 1994:223-225).

My own research supports Zeppel's claim that tourism marketing influences tourists' perceptions and their enjoyment of the tours and, in particular, what kind of longhouse they visit. However, I argue for a more complicated model of experience for both the tourists and the Iban, which includes the possibility of the tour itinerary understood as a knowing game about authenticity and the idea of wild Borneo. In addition, I demonstrate that the tour itinerary involves a clever blend of past and contemporary longhouse culture provided as wild Borneo theatre, which meets the requirements established in the marketing and through wild Borneo themes, while also allowing tourists to overlook (or enjoy) the contradiction that the tours are an easy, undemanding component of Asia-wide package tours. Furthermore, by providing a more detailed understanding of how longhouse residents manage their involvement with tour operators and tourists the thesis raises questions about the nature of the host/guest relationship (including what Zeppel means by 'meaningful' interaction). This is highlighted through an analysis of the unique business and social arrangements necessary for Iban communities to engage in organised longhouse tourism.

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[38] Notably, with this part of her analysis Zeppel does not critique the term 'tradition' and she discusses traditional practices and material culture without taking into account that tradition can be fluid and alter over time. Zeppel takes this approach in spite of the fact that previously she discusses tradition as socially-defined and variable.

Ong's (2000) paper on Rungus longhouse tourism in Sabah continues the themes defined by Eide and Zeppel.[39] Ong's research discusses two Rungus longhouses that were purpose-built for tourism in the early 1990s and her observations are relevant, although they do not relate specifically to Iban longhouse tourism. Ong explains that the Rungus villagers who are advertised as part of the 'attraction' in the marketing material do not actually live in the longhouses that tourists visit, but live nearby in stand-alone dwellings. The longhouses serve as accommodation for tourists. During the day the longhouses are used by the Rungus villagers as a location to do craftwork, repair fishing nets and so on, while at night they are used as the setting for tourists to be entertained with dance performances (Ong 2000:456-460).

Ong explains that the Sabah tourism industry promotes tourism to Rungus longhouses as a chance to see 'traditional' and 'primitive' living and she describes how the focus of Rungus tourism is on the longhouse as a physical attraction, along with its 'traditional' Rungus villagers and various aspects of 'traditional' Rungus material culture and lifestyle (Ong 2000:456-457). The similarity between the promotional material used to market Rungus tours and that used for Iban longhouse tours (see Chapter Five) is evident in the examples Ong provides:

> Tourists will be able to "mingle with ladies in sarongs and foot-long brass bracelets" (Borneo Eco Tour n.d), "learn about the culture of the Rungus people" (Exotic Borneo Holidays n.d) and be "treated to a feast of local delicacies while the Rungus perform spectacular cultural dances and music" (Home Away From Home n.d). This opportunity to obtain "a firsthand experience of living in a traditional longhouse where a few families share one long roof" (API Tour n.d) allows "the visitors to appreciate the unique rustic lifestyle of the Rungus" (Ong 2000:457).

Ong argues that, in response to such marketing, tourists arrive at the longhouse 'expecting' to see the 'markers' (she borrows the term from Zeppel) of Rungus culture that they have seen or been told about in 'tourism media':

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[39] The Rungus are an indigenous people of Sabah, East Malaysia. Prior to European colonisation the Rungus lived in longhouses, farmed hill rice and had an indigenous animist religion (Appell 1966, 1967). It is these basic characteristics of Rungus society that inform much of their present-day tourism industry market image, even though the majority of Rungus now choose to live in stand-alone dwellings and many families have been Christians for over a generation (pers.comm.Anna.Edmundson).

> The tourism media represented the longhouse (sight) [sic] through its markers (pieces of information). In the Bavanggazo situation, these markers included Rungus men and women living in the longhouse, Rungus' woven and bead products, dance and music, food and rice wine, costumes and the Guomantong forest. For the tourists, their tour becomes a search for the original of these representative markers (Ong 2000:460).[40]

Ong comments that tourists have a preconception of the Rungus as a backward 'pre-modern, pre-industrial human community', in contrast to how tourists define their own society (and themselves) as modern, industrial forward-thinking and so on (Ong 2000:462).[41] Here, Ong's interpretation is similar to Eide's and her observations strengthen the view that tourist preconceptions of longhouse life are shaped by marketing that appeals to long-held Western views about Borneo. Furthermore, and echoing an observation made by both Eide and Zeppel, Ong states that tour operators are aware that tourist preconceptions of Borneo are informed by the particular Western history of imagining Borneo and that the promotional material they devise is designed to appeal to it:

> Tour operators and travel writers have participated in spinning a discourse that reinforce [sic] tourists' perception towards the Rungus. A "traditional" Rungus longhouse, with the emphasis on the long roof without walls, reinforces the idea of harmony, solidarity and co-operation (Ong 2000:462).

One of the implications of Ong's essay and the similar postgraduate work of Eide and Zeppel is that there is a need for a closer view of the Western understanding of Borneo and its relationship to the longhouse tourism market and product. Accordingly, the next chapter of this thesis provides a more comprehensive and analytical account of Western ideas about Borneo as a context for closer study of the marketing of the longhouse tourism product and its implications for Iban longhouse residents. However, I make some preliminary comment about the theme of authenticity that is threaded through recent research, because a more analytical and multi-layered account of longhouse tourism requires further consideration of the approach to authenticity in this field.

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[40] Bavanggazo is the name of one of the two Rungus tourist longhouses Ong discusses. The contents of the round brackets in the quotation are in the original.

Authenticity

Recent research into longhouse tours and similar tours suggests that a great many tourists, perhaps the majority, regardless of what type (backpacker, mass tourist or package tourist) desire their tourist experience to be 'authentic' (see MacCannell 1973, 1976; Cohen 1979, 1988; Urry 1990; Harkin 1995; Hutnyk 1996; Waitt 2000; Taylor 2001; Adams 1984; Van Den Berghe 1984, 1989, 1995; Selwyn 1996). Van Den Bergh's account of tourism to Lacondes Indian villages in Southern Mexico sums up much of the emphasis of recent research on the tourist desire for authentic wild people. 'This mystique of living Indians as pure authentic descendants of an indigenous tradition appeals enormously to the tourist quest for authenticity' (Van Den Berghe 1995:576).

There are a number of views about why tourists desire authenticity, its meaning in tourism and tourist motivation for travel more generally, and as mentioned previously, an equal variety of classifications for the different types of tourists (for example, see MacCannell 1976; Smith 1978, 1989; Cohen 1988; Urry 1990; Boissevain 1996; Crick 1994; Wang 1999).

Of the major writing on why tourists desire authenticity, MacCannell's relatively early work (1973, 1976) has influenced much of what followed. MacCannell argues that 'sightseeing is a form of ritual respect for society' and that 'tourism absorbs some of the social functions of religion in the modern world' (MacCannell 1973:589). In that context he describes 'touristic consciousness' as motivated by its 'desire for authentic experiences' (MacCannell 1976:101). MacCannell argues that the 'modern' tourist is motivated by 'institutionalised concerns for the authenticity of his social experiences' (MacCannell 1973:590) and that tourists seek out 'back regions' - mythologised locations representing the opposite of 'front regions'. Developing on a theory first proposed by Goffman (1959), MacCannell proposes that tourists make a 'societal

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[41] Ong uses the terms *gemeinschaft* (referring to 'pre-modern' societies) and *gessellschaft* (referring to 'modern' societies) to describe this dichotomy in tourist thinking.

distinction' between back regions, which are seen as places where 'real' activities take place and front regions where 'social reality' demands performance and mystification, and the obscuring of intimate truths (MacCannell 1973:590-591). In the tourist setting MacCannell extends this view to include 'intimacy' and 'closeness' and 'being one of them ' (a local or host), as signs that a back region has been reached. MacCannell goes onto define back regions as the location where tourists believe they will find and experience authenticity. In contrast, front regions may include 'staged authenticity' for commercial tourism and/or signs of change, modernity and development that clash with visitor expectations and desire for the 'authentic', as defined in touristic consciousness (MacCannell 1973:594-598). MacCannell's theory supports a view of Borneo as a 'back region', which, as I show in Chapter Four, is further associated with a Western preoccupation with the local culture as indicative of the wild and a more general preoccupation with Western identity and civilization vis-à-vis 'primitive' culture and locations (Selwyn 1993).

MacCannell assumes that, given the right expert knowledge, an objective, measurable view of the authenticity of a particular object, event, or subject can be determined in terms of its local cultural context and local history.[42] Other academic material published around the same time, such as that by Turner and Ash (1975),[43] Greenwood (1978) and Nash (1978), demonstrate a similar view. MacCannell provides an account of authenticity according to a conventional understanding of history and traditional culture as definable, recordable and measurable, and to a significant extent a process registered in material culture. This thesis critiques that approach, through examination of the convention of wild Borneo and its major themes and through analysis of the promotional material for longhouse tours, the format and design of the tours, and analysis of the views of longhouse tours operators on Iban culture and tradition.

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[42] In a sense MacCannell posits himself as the ultimate connoisseur of anthropology and tourism, a highly specialised authority on the authentic and inauthentic across tourism, culture and society. For a critique of the connoisseur see Price (1989).

[43] Turner and Ash's book is often cited as an extreme example of early writing on modern tourism that assumes an objective understanding of authenticity similar to MacCannnell's. For example, remarking on the effects of modern tourism on non-industrialised societies, Turner and Ash note, 'the discoverers of paradises either (as explorers) kill off the unsuspecting noble savage with syphilis and the common cold, or less dramatically (as tourists) ruin them and their paradisal environments with the rampant commercialisation that is the nemesis of elitist capitalism' (Turner and Ash 1975:84-85).

Authors such as Cohen and Wang have challenged MacCannell's view. For example, Cohen describes authenticity as 'a socially constructed concept and its social (as against philosophical) connotation is, therefore, not given, but "negotiable"' (Cohen 1988:374), while Wang argues that:

> ...authenticity is not a matter of black and white, but rather involves a much wider spectrum, rich in ambiguous colours. That which is judged as inauthentic or staged authenticityby experts, intellectuals, or elites may be experienced as authentic and real from an emic perspectivethis may be the very way that mass tourists experience authenticity (Wang 1999:353).

In other words, more recent understanding of authenticity in tourism focuses on the subjectiveness (and inter-subjectiveness) of particular views of the 'authentic'. For example, as Bruner notes:

> No longer is authenticity a property inherent in an object, forever fixed in time; it is seen as a struggle, a social process, in which competing interests argue for their own interpretation of history (Bruner 1994:408).

The recent emphasis on the subjective has special relevance to the popular tourist understanding of authenticity that is associated with destinations such as Iban longhouses, which are known and promoted as defining sites of the wild and the primitive (see Chapters Four and Five). Authenticity, therefore, becomes associated with a powerful Western popular stereotype of lack of historical change in primeval culture. In the circumstance, seeing a longhouse and people such as the Iban in a way that continues stereotypes of Borneo defined in the last two hundred years becomes a powerful experience of popular authenticity and a basic tourist desire.

Acknowledging the subjective character of authenticity underlines that it is the tourist's 'perception' of authenticity that is critical to successful tourism products (a point which both Zeppel and Eide recognise in their studies of longhouse tourism). For example, Hitchcock (2000), writing on souvenirs (which are a core focus of much tourism, including longhouse tourism) has noted that there is a link between the perceived authenticity of souvenirs and how tourists experience the authenticity of a particular destination and its people more generally (Hitchcock 2000:5).

This study acknowledges the significant role of authenticity in longhouse tourism and expands upon it by focussing on the social process involved in the peculiar way the longhouse tour industry is wedded to a view of Iban longhouse culture as wild Borneo, the willingness and enthusiasm with which longhouse residents perform the packaged version of wild Borneo that the tour industry constructs and the business arrangements that secure it. In this context, recent comment on 'staged authenticity' (such as Wang 1999:353) and performance adds to understanding. The documentation and comment that follows stresses that much of the longhouse tour product is a hybrid of historical and contemporary Iban culture and a complicated performance in which the longhouse is like a theatre of illusions about the past and the present. Furthermore, the evidence presented indicates that the longhouse tour product clashes with a general movement towards modernisation and development amongst Iban longhouse communities in Sarawak, which raises questions about the future of the longhouse product and how longhouse culture is defined in relation to Malaysia's development agenda. One outcome of this is that theme park and other purpose-built-for-tourism longhouses may represent the future of 'authentic' longhouse tourism.

Other recent studies concentrate on how tourists manage and cope with authenticity and/or a perceived lack of it in differing tourist contexts (Wang 1999:366). Here, Cohen and Urry's work has been most influential. For example, Cohen, while noting the centrality of authenticity in tourism, introduces the notion of 'play' to explain the continued success of tourism that, on the one hand, asserts an authentic experience while, on the other hand, is clearly commercialised and staged for tourism and, therefore, open to interpretation as 'inauthentic':

> Since most rank and file tourists do not aspire to much depth, a few traits of a culture product which appear "authentic" will in most cases suffice for its acceptance as an "authentic" product. Hence, mass tourism does not succeed because it is a colossal deception, but because most tourists entertain concepts of authenticity which are much looser than those entertained by intellectuals and experts, such as curators and anthropologists. Indeed for many tourists, tourism is a form of play (Cohen 1985), which like all play, has profound roots in reality, but for the success of which a great deal of make-believe, on the part of both performers and audience, is necessary. They willingly, even if unconsciously, participate playfully in a game of "as if", pretending that a contrived product is authentic, even if deep down they are not convinced of its authenticity (Cohen 1988:383).

A specific example of this kind of tourism experience is the staged 'traditional' dance performances and welcoming ceremonies provided as part of longhouse tours (described in Chapter Six). In fact, it will be shown in this thesis that the entire genre of organised longhouse tourism is understandable in relation to Cohen's 'as if' games of cultural pretence. The general issue is that, for both the tourists and the Iban residents, longhouse tourism is experienced within the terms of the relatively recent direction of global capitalism to highly developed global consumerism based in media culture and the interchange between reality and fiction of media culture.[44] On the other hand, the focus here is on the process of Iban assimilation into a culture of product, performance and commercial gain.

Further developing the theme of consumerism and tourism as 'play', Urry has proposed the idea of the post-tourist who:

> ...knows that they are a tourist and that tourism is a game, or rather a series of games with multiple texts and no single, authentic tourist experiences. The post-tourist thus knows that they will have to queue time and time again, that there will be hassles over foreign exchange, that the glossy brochure is a piece of pop culture, that the apparently authentic local entertainment is as socially contrived as the ethnic bar, and that the supposedly quaint and traditional fishing village could not survive without the income from tourism (Urry 1990:100).

Urry's model of the post-tourist is predicated on the notion of a sophisticated traveller engaged in an activity involving desire and enjoyment, while 'playing' with particular ideas about what is authentic in the context of tourism and pop-culture. Urry's post-tourist is nonetheless aware of the subjectiveness and inter-subjectiveness of such ideas. The model of the post-tourist is useful for explaining some elements of longhouse tourism and tourist behaviour during the tours, particularly the staged elements of the tours that require tourist participation, such as the traditional dance performances and 'headhunting weddings' described in Chapter Six.

Urry and Cohen's perspective on authenticity in tourism allows for a complex view of authenticity in relation to longhouse tourism. However, the notion of play tends to lessen a sense of the direct social, economic and political significance that perceptions

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[44] Umberto Eco's essay, *Travels in Hyperreality* (1987) is an excellent discussion of the commercial potential of this

of authenticity have for both tourists and tourees. As my own observations and the research of previous scholars such as Eide and Zeppel illustrate, tourists to longhouses continue to partially validate their longhouse experiences on the basis of particular ideas about what constitutes an authentic Iban longhouse community. Well-known indicators of 'traditional' and 'authentic' culture are important for tourists, especially when the promotional material has primed them to expect these 'markers'. Selwyn (1996) writing in *The Tourist Image, Myths and Myths Making in Tourism* locates the point about tourists and authenticity within a broader debate about the method and effect of post-modern ethnography:

> It is precisely at this point that discussions of authenticity fit in. Such discussions help us to remain aware of what is at stake if, as observers (museum curators, historians, heritage managers, anthropologists, or whatever), we follow the most playful (or are they most serious?) post modernist invitations to relax our sensitivity to the differences and distinctions between such terms as, say, history or heritage, or scholarly and popular narrative. Furthermore...this volume suggests that beneath the surface structures of the various tourist sites, experiences, images and myths discussed, there remains a clearly identifiable substructure of concern in the tourist imagination with traditional looking themes which seem at once modern and premodern and to which the term 'authentic' seems all too applicable, namely the nature of the social and the self (Selwyn 1996:20).

Selwyn reminds us of the continuing authority that ideas such as authenticity have in social practice, including for tourists and for the legitimacy of observers such as anthropologists. Later in the same volume Selwyn develops his critique of post-modern ethnography, cautioning that 'critique based on a meta-narrative of reason' should not 'be swept away in the heady post-modern rhetoric about high street knowledge' and concluding that 'questions of authenticity are ultimately political' (Selwyn 1996:27). However, Selwyn does not argue for a wholesale abandonment of post-modernism and the post-modern perspective in analysis. Rather, he concludes his discussion on authenticity and tourism with:

> Tourism is about the invention and reinvention of tradition. It is about the production and consumption of myths and staged inauthenticities. It also has far-reaching economic, political and social consequences at levels ranging from the household to the nation. It has been argued here that tourist myths have one sort of authenticity and serious historical, economic and political constructions another. The trick is to keep them apart so that consenting adults may engage in the exchange of myths without endangering those who choose, for whatever reason, not to consent. There is therefore a need to distinguish clearly between two types of authenticity which, in most if not all respects are analytically quite different (Selwyn 1996:28).

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confluence, particularly in relation to purpose-built tourist attractions (Eco 1987:3-58).

The essence of Selwyn's approach is to explore the effect of authenticity in tourism with an understanding of its manufactured nature and subjectivity while continuing to recognise and critique its meaning and effect in relation to significant questions of social, political and economic well-being in tourism settings. This thesis draws on Selwyn's approach in that much of the focus is on the construction, history and application of a particular view of authentic longhouse and Iban life packaged for longhouse tours (see for example Chapters Four and Five), as well as on the social and economic implications of longhouse tourism for Iban longhouse residents (see Chapters Six and Seven). It will be seen that, although a particular and long-established view of the 'authentic' longhouse community remains the central characteristic of the current mode of operation of the longhouse tour industry in Sarawak, it is increasingly contradictory to contemporary Iban longhouse life. Accordingly, although longhouse tour operators promote a particular view of authentic longhouse life, they also introduce a certain ambiguity to the narrative. This permits a range of interpretations about what constitutes an authentic longhouse community which, in turn, allows the tour operators a broad and shifting legitimacy when promoting their products to tourists who define and seek authenticity differently.

Overall, this thesis builds on the work of previous researchers to define the current mode of operation of the longhouse tour industry and examine what that means for the manner in which longhouse communities organise and manage their involvement with tourism. The contribution includes illustrating how communities and *bilik*-families administer the day-to-day business arrangements of tourism business and the possibilities and limitations that longhouse tourism offers to communities wishing to modernise and develop their longhouses.

Chapter 4: Wild Borneo Tall Stories

> It was heavenly to leave civilisation behind them and they were all excited. ... They slept at a long house and their Dayak hosts celebrated their visit with arrack, eloquence and a fantastic dance. Next day the river, narrowing, gave them more definitely the feeling that they were adventuring into the unknown, and the exotic vegetation that crowded the banks to the water's edge, like an excited mob pushed from behind by a multitude, caused Neil a breathless ravishment. O wonder and delight! (Somerset Maugham, *Neil Macadam* (Maugham 1951, Volume Three: 1556).

> Like every wide-eyed tourist in Sarawak for the first time, I expected all those things promised by the tourist guides and holiday brochures: thatched huts; hornbills; and orang-utans in every tree; semi-naked natives bedecked with feathers and animal skins, wandering around town brandishing blowpipes. But even without such exotic expectations, nothing could have prepared me for the reality of modern Kuching... I was going to Borneo! It was an outrageously exciting prospect. The name of the island means so much more than a simple place...it sums up an image of everything that is wild and romantic about the East ('An Englishman in Kuching', *Sarawak Tribune*, Wednesday 17April 1996:6).

This chapter describes a traditional set of ideas and images about 'wild Borneo' that has shaped the way Borneo is known by the West. In the first part of the chapter I outline the theoretical approach I have taken to identify the tradition of wild Borneo. I then discuss a selection of texts, including accounts by early travellers and colonial administrators, novels, travel writing, lithographs, photographs and films. The analysis distinguishes between the developing tradition of wild Borneo in the nineteenth century, discussed in the first half of the chapter, and more recent transformations in the twentieth century, discussed in the second half of the chapter. The discussion concludes with an example of a contemporary wild Borneo text from Europe that features the Stamang longhouse community.

Wild Borneo

The tradition of wild Borneo has become a vivid and evocative understanding of Borneo shared by many Westerners and people in the East, across time, in different locations and through a continuing circulation of a wide range of texts. It involves the realities of lived historical experience, selective reporting and representation and stylised responses and stereotypes. It is a tradition of understanding and representation defined in relation to colonialism, ideas about evolution and race and the recent shift to globalism and is remarkable for its continuity as a way of understanding Borneo, although it also

develops in response to other ideas and other cultural experiences and in terms of ambivalence, contention and contradictions. It is a discursive narrative rather than a set of scientific observations and it develops as an uneven and inaccurate field of generalisation and detail. The tradition of wild Borneo does not transmit an intimate, detailed knowledge of Borneo's geography, history, or indigenous people. Instead, it defines Borneo according to the characteristics of a traditional narrative.[1]

In nineteenth century texts, Borneo is a defining site of wild nature and 'primitive' people and places, and seen in terms of a set of particular characteristics and meanings which include remoteness and isolation, a 'back region', forest wilderness, the orang-utan, headhunting, Darwinian ideas of racial and social evolutionary development, the 'missing link' and the 'wild man of Borneo'. These themes continue in twentieth century texts, with emphasis on the idea that Borneo is a primitive world in contrast to Western modernity, but with the contradiction that wild Borneo is part of the global industries of communication, entertainment and travel. In addition to describing the tradition of wild Borneo this chapter examines parallels between the historical development of the tradition and recent longhouse tourism. In later chapters I build on the analysis of the marketing for Sarawak and longhouse tours in the work of previous researchers and show that the tradition of wild Borneo is a key influence on contemporary travel marketing for Sarawak and the current mode of operation of the longhouse tourism industry.

Trevor Millum (1994) observes that many Western accounts of Borneo are essentially Orientalist. Millum's reference is to Edward Said's theory of a discourse of Orientalism, and Millum's understanding of the usefulness of Said's theory is similar to my own. Said's discourse theory provides a useful theoretical support for understanding the tradition of wild Borneo and will be discussed later in this chapter. However, Orientalism is less useful to the extent that it suggests ways of understanding and representation that are invariable, total or monological. The tradition of wild Borneo is only one way of understanding Borneo and it is implicated in a wider process

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[1] For example, it often groups all of Borneo's non-Muslim indigenous people together as 'headhunters' and 'primitive', rather than accurately differentiating between indigenous groups such as Iban, Kenyah, Kayan and Bidayuh.

of definition, representation and historical change. This is a point made by Millum (1994), who comments that, 'From the standpoint of the 1990s, it is easy to assume that all explorers, government officials or colonial officers shared a common view of the world. Clearly, this is rarely, if ever the case at any historical moment' (Millum 1994:8).

Similarly, it is not my contention that every Western account of Borneo, both past and present, is dominated by a single discourse of wild Borneo. Tracing the tradition of wild Borneo involves seeing the ambivalences and contradictions associated with its main themes in relation to a wider field of historical experience and understanding. For example, the development of the tradition includes a lack of precision in the early ethnography of Borneo and contradictory views of Borneo's non-Muslim indigenous peoples as headhunters or noble savages. In the nineteenth century there is a tendency to blur the differences between all indigenous groups and to see all the people of Borneo as romantic 'Malays' or 'primitive headhunters'. Another feature of the tradition is that it develops in relation to a limited set of signifiers: words such as 'wild', 'headhunter' and the name 'Borneo' itself; and images of 'Dayaks', 'longhouses' and 'traditional' culture. In addition, there is a view of Borneo as a remote and isolated site of the survival of primeval species, in contrast to colonial confidence that Borneo was available for trade, adventure and tourism.

Nevertheless, what is remarkable is that a vast amount of writing on Borneo across time, and in different media and different genres, reveals continuing ideas, images and rhetoric that constitute a tradition of wild Borneo.

Saunders (1993) notes that the travel industry in Borneo uses conventional imagery and cultivates a stylised impression. While Saunders does not link his analysis of Western accounts of Borneo to discourse theory, his comments focus on the way Borneo and life in Borneo are perceived in terms of traditional Western ways of understanding (Saunders 1993:25). Furthermore, Saunders makes his point not merely in relation to Westerners, but in relation to how contemporary Borneans understand themselves:

> These images [of Borneo] have affected the attitudes and self-perceptions of the people of Borneo themselves. It has been no one-sided exchange. Borneans have responded to European contact in ways which helped develop the European image of Borneo: but they themselves have

> also been affected and influenced by that image so that their behaviour has been changed by it. We can see this most clearly in the tourist industry itself, where Borneans exploit the tourist image of Borneo in order to fulfil the expectations of modern travellers. This is not as cynical as the word 'exploit' perhaps implies, for many Borneans have come to accept that image, at least in part, as reflecting a reality which at one time existed, even if they regard it as being kept artificially alive now. Moreover, that image has acquired a new dimension as an expression of a Bornean identity (Saunders 1993:285).

Saunders (1993), Millum (1994) and King (1992 and 1999b) note relevant features of style, genre and motivation in Western-published travel accounts of Borneo. For example, Millum makes a useful distinction based on motive between largely nineteenth century accounts with the purportedly scientific goal of 'the classifier and collector' and largely twentieth century accounts by the 'free and easy traveller' - in other words, the 'tourist' (and he notes that there is crossover between both categories in both centuries) (Millum 1994:4). What is clear, however, is that the nineteenth and twentieth century colonial experience includes various forms of travel and establishes the theme of a tour and an itinerary within the wild Borneo tradition.

Saunders and King categorise Western accounts of Borneo using a similar framework. King, who has compiled two anthologies of travel writing on Borneo (1992 and 1999b), comments that:

> ... there are often differences between writers' observations which derive from a brief encounter with strange places and peoples, or from a leisurely tourist visit; those which come from a long period of residence in the country, or from an engagement which has a very specific purpose...In this selection of readings one will usually discern clear differences between the accounts of the serious scientists and explorers, on a journey of discovery, observation and recording, and the tourist, who wants to experience the new, the different, but usually in a more safe and managed environment...There were also those who embarked on more physically dangerous journeys justified in the name of European law and order to suppress headhunting and raiding or to apprehend local 'rebels' (King 1999b:xi-xii).

King notes that some Western accounts of Borneo journeys were justified in 'the name of European law' and were part of the colonial project. This is a significant factor with both fictional and non-fictional accounts of Borneo in which the author's relationship with colonialism affects both the message and style of the text.

The following discussion of Borneo texts provides evidence for the Western tradition of understanding and representation that I define as 'wild Borneo', and its particular features, and engages critically with its field of assumptions, prejudices and

exaggerations. The discussion also begins to show the continuity from the past to the present mode of operation of the longhouse tourism industry.

Wild Borneo texts

There is a great diversity of Western writing and other texts about Borneo. There is a significant number of Borneo texts from the late nineteenth century, with a noticeable increase between World War I and World War II and an explosion of publications and media texts from the mid 1950s associated with increases in modernisation and technological development.[2] While the following examples provide an historical view of wild Borneo texts, the primary aim is to trace the main themes of the tradition.

The selection of texts rests heavily on accounts of Sarawak and Sabah that are in English and I wish to acknowledge that limitation. My language skills prevented me from accessing the considerable store of Dutch and other non-English material on Borneo.[3] An exception was made with a recent text in Swedish specifically relevant to Stamang longhouse, from which I had relevant sections translated.

The nineteenth century

In *The Peoples of Borneo* King (1993b) comments on the provenance of a remarkably constant, popular, European view of Borneo, which was shaped in the first period of Western trade in the area and consolidated in the nineteenth century:

> Ever since Europeans first came to the islands lying across the great seaways between India and China from the beginning of the sixteenth century, Western popular images of Borneo have

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[2] Prior to World War II there is very little locally-produced material, with the exception of the *The Sarawak Gazette*, published in Kuching.

[3] For example, particularly with early writing on Borneo, access to some French texts such as Eric Mjöberg's *Borneo L'Ile Des Chasseures De Têtes* (1934) would have extended the scope of analysis, but translation was not feasible. However, Mjöberg's *Forest Life and Adventures in the Malay Archipelago* (1988) is available in an English edition. While it is primarily concerned with popular science descriptions of the flora and fauna of the region, including Borneo, the introduction includes sensational references to Borneo's 'primeval forest', 'primitive inhabitants' and 'the darkest recesses of the Island of Borneo' (Mjöberg 1988:13).

> remained remarkably constant, and these were reinforced in the nineteenth century when the Europeans came into closer and closer contact with the interior natives, resulting in an increasing number of publications by travellers, explorers, scientists, administrators and missionaries for a European educated readership (King 1993:8-10).

As King notes, one of the earliest and most dramatic images of Borneo was Captain Daniel Beeckman's 1718 depiction of the orang-utan as a fabulous beast, part human and part wild animal (King 1993b:11-12). King outlines the development of a nineteenth century tradition in which increasing trade and colonisation involved a new range of texts and themes: accounts of the life of James Brooke as a classic colonial adventurer; a first wave of scientific and scholarly texts, such as Alfred Russel Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago* (1869); and colonial adventure fictions, such as James Greenwood's *The Adventures of Reuben Davidger* (1869) (King 1993b:9-11). These nineteenth century texts contribute to a view of Borneo which involves essential contradictions. For example, at one extreme, Borneo is presented as the home of the 'Dayaks', who are savage headhunters. In contrast, Borneo is also a place of colonial control and order, where travellers, who are beginning to define themselves as tourists, can pursue adventure. Ida Pfeiffer's account of her travels in Sarawak and Dutch Borneo in 1852 in *A Lady's Second Journey Round The World* (published in 1855) is probably the first published account of a trip to Sarawak and Borneo that was, as Pfeiffer calls it, merely a 'wandering'.

The nineteenth century view includes the complication that Borneo is seen in relation to the debate about evolution and Darwin's theories, explored in *The Descent of Man* (1871). Darwin linked the idea of primeval ages of evolution involving apes and man with the claim that remote and isolated islands such as Borneo and Madagascar were refuges for the progenitors of modern species (Darwin 1871:155-7). Darwin's theory led to a new wave of speculation about man-monkeys living in Borneo and added impetus to travel and adventure fiction about Borneo as a strange island which was a refuge for tribes of 'men with tails'. The most extreme example of the tradition in popular culture is Barnum's exhibition of the fake 'Wild Man from Borneo' and the fake 'What Is It? - Man or Monkey' in his popular museums in the 1880s, in the same period as his Ethnological Congress which promised to 'place upon exhibition the various types of humanity from all the sections of the earth' (Adams 1997:156-

161,182). The texts that follow illustrate the development of the nineteenth century tradition and the characteristic contradictions it involved.

A Short Trip to Sarawak and the Land of the Dayaks (1870)

In 1870 in Kuching, Thomas S. Graham published a collection of 22 lithographs entitled *A Short Trip to Sarawak and the Land of the Dayaks*.[4] Graham presents Borneo as an experience seen through the eyes of a 'gentleman tourist' important enough to be made welcome by Rajah Brooke. He is a tourist on a short pleasure trip distantly related to the European 'grand tour', although at a point where the tradition of travel has been expanded by the possibilities for a gentleman adventurer within the relative security and comfort provided by colonial administration.

Graham's lithographs are in the style of cartoon imagery that was widely current in newspapers and other publications of the period. Each plate includes a brief, hand-written comment by the artist describing the events in the scene. The series presents an account of a 'short trip' to Sarawak that is mainly an account of a journey upriver to a 'Dayak' longhouse.[5] The river journey and longhouse visit are presented as a definitive tour and travel itinerary for Borneo in a way that sets a pattern for the tradition of wild Borneo and looks forward to late twentieth century tourism. The lithographs partially resemble recent tourist brochures for Sarawak and longhouse tours.

For example, in Plate 1, the title page, the first three words of the title ('*A Short Trip*') are drawn in stylised letters resembling tree branches. The edges of the page are framed with jungle foliage as if the reader is peering through an opening in the jungle to view what will unfold. A monkey dangling from the branch of a tree holds the letter 'A' and a wild boar and deer can be seen hiding in the jungle. A small longhouse sits on a hill and there is a Dayak shield covered with crossed swords in the grass below the title.

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[4] Unfortunately, 'published in Kuching' is the only information contained on the hand-drawn cover. A likely assumption is that the booklet was published by the Sarawak Government Press, which began publication of *The Sarawak Gazette* in the same year. Only 104 copies of Graham's collection were produced. One explanation is that it might have been published to entertain Western members of the Sarawak civil service, as well as perhaps for distribution among the Western population of colonial Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia.

[5] Graham identifies the longhouse residents as 'Lautas'.

Plate 1 is characteristic of the tradition of wild Borneo in that the Iban are presented as one 'feature' of the Borneo jungle among other strange and exotic flora and fauna.

Plate 3 shows Graham lounging on the upper deck of a sailing ship. He is pictured drinking wine and gazing across the river to Mt Santabong, which is shown in the background shrouded in mist. The caption reads, 'Tourist having sailed for Sarawak aboard the Royalist arrives at Santabong' (making explicit the fact that Graham is presenting himself as a 'tourist'). In Plates 4 to 8 he is greeted by 'the Raja' (Rajah Charles Brooke) who accompanies him upriver to a 'fort', where Graham is introduced to the Resident,[6] and treated to a demonstration of sword dancing by local Malays who, as the caption reads: 'inquire after the health of Queen Victoria - tourist thinks they're affable'. Plate 9 shows the Resident's longboat making its way upriver with a large longhouse on the far riverbank. The caption states, 'Tourist sets off in Resident's longboat to pay a visit to some Dayaks up country'. Plate 10 shows the Resident and Graham reclining in the longboat reading and drinking while a team of oarsman paddle the boat upstream. In other words, Plates 4 to 10 establish the river journey as part of a Borneo itinerary and introduce the image of a picturesque longhouse and the theme of a visit to the 'Dayaks'. Furthermore, these plates suggest that although the journey is a trip into the wild, the wild is under colonial control, and the tour is a pleasurable experience with little danger or effort involved. This reflects the contradictions that permeate the wild Borneo tradition.

Plates 11 to 20 represent Graham's experience during his stay in a longhouse. With the exception of the large feast depicted in Plate 17, the events parallel the program of contemporary longhouse tours, and Graham's observations mirror those of many recent tourists. Plate 11 depicts the customary notched log entrance to a longhouse (*tangga*) and shows Graham struggling up the log with the assistance of several oarsmen and longhouse residents. Plate 12 is a crowded scene in the *ruai* showing residents looking curiously at the Resident's party. Plates and dishes can be seen placed on the floor in front of Graham, the Resident and a longhouse resident who is possibly the Tuai Rumah. The scene shows an offering (*piring*) being made to celebrate the arrival of the

visitors which mirrors the style of offerings included with contemporary longhouse tours. While offerings like these are still performed in longhouse communities for various customary reasons, on longhouse tours they are staged as part of the pre-arranged fee-earning program. Arguably, the intention is to recreate the experience of visitors such as Graham, who visited longhouses during the colonial period when it was common for Western visitors to be welcomed as honoured guests.

The scenes of life in the longhouse include feasting, 'Dayak' men described as the 'braves of the tribe' (Plate 14), local jars and cloths and references to trophies and animistic religion (Plate 15). The plates highlight the essential paradox that continues in recent tourism that the Iban are strange people of the wild jungle but willing to welcome a tourist into the life of the longhouse. A further complication is the theme of erotic curiosity that is apparent in Plates 13, 15, 16 and 18, which depict bare-breasted longhouse women parading, dancing, or waiting on Graham. The historical literature shows that in 1871 (and well into the later twentieth century) Sarawak longhouse women in general did not cover their breasts (see, for example, illustrations in Gomes (1911), Hose (1994), Hose and McDougal (1966), Mjöberg (1988), King (1993b), Reece (1993) and Roth (1968)), and Graham's depiction is not a misrepresentation. However, in each plate he has drawn himself gazing at the women in a way that signals that he finds them sexually attractive and that they are to be seen as sexual exhibits.

Plate 17, 'The Feast' (Figure 5), is the largest and most ambitious sketch in the series. It presents a panoramic scene of drunkenness with longhouse residents dancing, collapsing, embracing each other and playing rowdy drunken games. A number of the residents stand leaning over the edge of the feast ground being ill. The tourist is pictured seated at the back under a small marquee, watching the drunken crowd with an expression of amazement. The caption reads: 'The three figures dancing on the left are those of people invoking the spirits for the welfare of the tribe. The rest of the company is drunk with the exception of the Malays. Tourist thinks it is time to go'.

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[6] During the reign of James and Charles Brooke 'Resident' was the term and title for the senior Sarawak Government officer of a particular district. (Pringle 1970:143-142).

Plate 17 is an extreme example of the message implicit in all of the plates that the longhouse is an exotic place, but one in which visitors are welcome and where they are safe and privileged observers. The scene emphasises Graham's uncertainty about whether longhouse residents are curious, entertaining 'primitives' or wild and dangerous. It also has a theatrical quality and invokes the recreations of the wild in nineteenth century circuses. In this sense, it is an early statement of a theme that develops more strongly in recent tourism, that the experience of longhouse life is not compromised, and might even seem especially attractive, if it becomes a theatrical performance for the tourist. Plate 17 is reminiscent of the picture puzzles popular during the Victorian period: at first glance it might seem to be a scene of savage violence, like a stereotype of an American Indian war dance, a possibility underlined by the earlier reference to the men as the 'braves of the tribe'; however, there is the joke that the men leaning over the fence are vomiting and the general impression is one of happy drunkenness.

The bias in much of Graham's visual imagery is towards a comic view of the journey. This humour places Graham's account at a point in the development of Victorian culture where the colonial experience was being reshaped in terms of a view in which the Orient was understood as wild, but safely entertaining and for the leisure and enjoyment of the West.[7]

The mix of real experience with comic entertainment and the exaggeration and fantasy of a traveller's tale continues throughout Graham's volume. It provides an historical precedent for the view of travel to Borneo and Sarawak involved in the later longhouse tour industry.

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[7] There are significant similarities between the prose and cartoon style of Graham's account of Borneo and the colonial Indian burlesque of W.M Thackeray's illustrated story *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan*, seen in Thackeray's collected works of the same decade (Thackeray 1879).

Figure 5: Plate 17 from *A Short Trip To Sarawak And The Land Of The Dayaks* 1870 by Thomas S. Graham.

Graham's volume illustrates the general continuity between early colonial Western travel and contemporary Western tourism, including the establishment of a conventional Bornean travel itinerary seen in terms of exotic adventure and amusing entertainment. This foreshadows later developments in mass tourism involving notions of play and self-conscious 'gaming' with the idea of being a tourist and exploring exotic destinations (Cohen 1988:383; Urry 1990:100).

In Plate 18 Graham depicts himself seated in a *bilik* with three bare-breasted Iban women attentively admiring his possessions. The caption reads, 'Tourist pays a visit to the wife and daughters of the chief in their private apartment who admire his watch and handkerchief etc'. In this way Plate 18 implies that the industrialised Western world and its products are foreign to longhouse people. In 1870 when Graham visited the longhouse this may, to a certain extent, have been true. It is certainly not the case in present-day Borneo. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in Chapter Five, the Sarawak longhouse tour industry continues to suggest that longhouse people live removed from the modern industrialised world. Plate 18 points to the contemporary construction of longhouse people in the Sarawak and longhouse travel industry as anchored in the past experience of Westerners who visited longhouses and in an historical view of longhouse peoples' interaction with the West.

Plate 19 (Figure 6) shifts into a sensational narrative of wild savagery, which Graham sets into his story of visiting Sarawak. The image represents a tale about headhunting Graham claims to have been told at some time during his tour. The sketch shows three 'Dayak' warriors, in full war costume in the process of chopping the head off a man who lies dying (or dead) on a beach. The victims are wearing long trousers, which suggests that they are not Dayak and are either European, Chinese or Malay. The caption reads: 'Tourist hears of the above scene which took place on the Kalakah sands'.

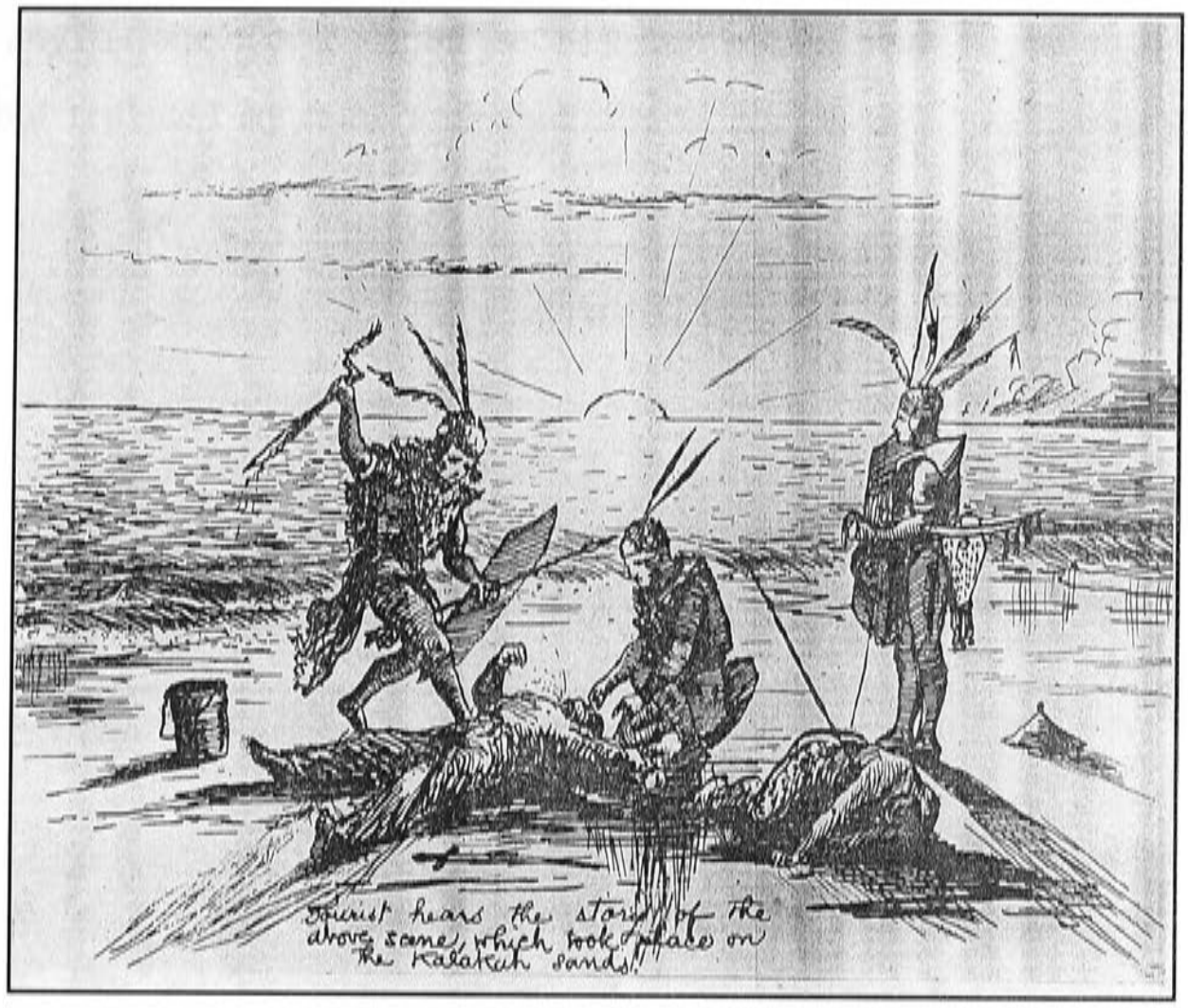

Figure 6: Plate 19 from *A Short Trip To Sarawak And The Land Of The Dayaks* (1870) by Thomas S. Graham.

Headhunting is one of the most powerful signifiers of the tradition of wild Borneo. Graham, like many other Western travellers to Borneo and Sarawak since (see, for example, Sargent (1976), Hose and McDougall (1966) and Roth (1968)), refers to headhunting as one of the main features of Borneo and by placing the above image in his narrative, Graham makes it an authentic feature of historical life in Borneo and one which helps to make a tour to Borneo a visit to a dramatic and sensationally different world. On the other hand, Graham's story and Plate 19 make clear that he did not witness any scenes of headhunting and that during his visit the residents were welcoming domestic people with an interest in pleasure. That is, the headhunting story seems to be a guarantee that Graham has visited the wild at its most savage and dangerous, but that the wildness of the Iban headhunters is in some way distant and even perhaps already beginning to recede into the past. In this sense, headhunting is a focus for powerful contradictions in the nineteenth century account of wild Borneo that are continued in the later developments of the tradition. For Graham, the headhunters of wild Borneo are at once present and past: past by their primitive ferocity (and in stories such as Graham's, headhunting is frequently presented as a kind of bloodthirsty sport

without any rationale or complex motivation) and present in the same world as the tourist, but replaced by tame and entertaining people who are interested in Western culture.

Figure 7: Plate 22 from *A Short Trip To Sarawak And The Land Of The Dayaks* (1870) by Thomas S. Graham.

Plate 22 (Figure 7, above) is the final plate in the series. The tourist is shown standing in his bedroom in Singapore peering over his shoulder into a full-length mirror. His expression is a mixture of a cheeky grin (directed at the viewer) and a self-satisfied smile. He is dressed in a 'Dayak' war jacket and feathered headdress and holds a shield and sword. The final caption reads: 'Tourist having returned to Singapore with a tolerable collection of arms and 'Dayak' curios - seeks the solitude of his bed chamber and performing a war dance before the looking glass in full Dayak costume bids you adieu'.

The last plate returns to the theme that Graham regards himself as a tourist. It confirms basic complexities already involved in the experience and appropriation of wild Borneo for the Western tourist in 1870. The reference to Graham 'performing a war dance in

full Dayak costume' underscores the importance of the reputation of 'Dayaks' as wild and dangerous warriors, but the image is further evidence that 'Dayaks' and the rest of wild Borneo are already seen as part of the (knowing, self-aware) entertainment and games of a holiday. The image represents wild Borneo as an historical reality which is already part of a tourist process of representation and performance, including the transformation of longhouse life and artefacts into tourist curios and tourist tales, a process in which accurate knowledge and reporting may be overshadowed by exaggeration and fantasy, driven by the priorities of entertainment and pleasure.

Waiting for the Tide or Scraps and Scrawls from Sarawak (1875)

Waiting for the Tide or Scraps and Scrawls from Sarawak, printed in Sarawak in 1875, is a collection of short stories edited by H. H. Everett, with lithograph illustrations that are similar to Graham's.[8] The preface explains that the collection of stories, bound together in a small, self-published volume, are those of six Sarawak civil servants who, while on their way to Kuching by boat on Christmas Eve in 1875, became stuck in a tributary of the Sarawak River and had to wait overnight for the tide to rise. The preface notes that the volume was printed in Kuching by a 'Chinese boy educated on the mission here' and that the lithographs were etched in Singapore.

The stories in *Waiting for the Tide* are adventure tales or, more precisely, the tall stories of Sarawak civil service officers. They include: *A Pirate Story* by W. Fraser, about battling pirates with James Brooke; *A Jungle Heroine* by A. Perry, a story of treachery and headhunting in a Kayan longhouse; *Men With Tails* by T. Skipwith, about a visit to a lost tribe of 'missing link' men with tails; *To The Rescue* by O.C. Vane, about an Iban girl abducted by an orang-utan; and *Don's Story* by W.H. Don, another search for a 'lost tribe'. While the stories are minor literature of the period - the introduction to the volume states that it has 'no pretensions to be a literary production, but is simply what it is entitled - Scraps and Scrawls from our Sarawak life...' (Everett 1875[9]) - they are a

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[8] The cover notes the illustrators as H. H. Everett and J. S Chapman and the authors of the six stories as W. Fraser, A. Perry, T. Skipwith, O.C. Vane, H. Roscoe, and W.H. Don.
[9] The volume does not include page numbers.

complicated mix of conventional travel literature and sensational colonial adventure reminiscent of a Boys' Own Annual.[10]

For the contemporary reader the content of the stories such as Skipwith's *Men With Tails* defines them as fiction. For a reader in 1875, the fictional nature of *Men With Tails* may not have been so clear, especially given how recent and controversial Darwin's theory of the evolution of species was at that time[11] and the exaggerated extrapolations of Darwin's theory that formed part of the popular and scientific culture of the period. Further, the volume itself creates considerable ambiguity about whether the stories are fact or fiction. Everett, for example, describes Sarawak life as 'in itself strange, wild and romantic', the implication being that it is an experience where truth is stranger than fiction, or like the wildest and most fantastic adventure fiction (Everett 1875). Skipwith continues the game about truth and fiction by commenting: 'I offer a plain simple narrative of facts to all, an unvarnished statement which must stand on its own merits' (Skipwith 1875). The implication is again that Borneo is so 'strange, wild and romantic' that accounts of the island can seem like fiction and exaggerated fictions can seem like fact. In this sense, *Waiting for the Tide* is an excellent example of the tendency for Western texts about Borneo to exaggerate the exoticism of the island and its inhabitants by mixing fact and fantasy.

Skipwith's story of a tribe of men with tails is a notable early example of the nexus between Borneo, Darwinian theory and the idea of an evolutionary missing link between monkeys and men which has become one of the main features in the tradition of wild Borneo. Wild Borneo becomes a key discourse in which the pre-Darwinian tradition of the missing link as a man-monkey with a tail merges with popular interpretations of the Darwinian descent of man.

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[10] Routledge (London) first published *The Every Boy's Annual* (the precursor to *The Boy's Own Annual*) in 1860.
[11] Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* was first published in 1860 (London, Murray, W. Clowes) and *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* was first published in 1871 (London, Murray, W. Clowes).

The introductory paragraph of *Men with Tails* suggests that Skipwith is aware of Darwinian evolutionary theory and that the intention is for the reader to interpret parts of the story within that framework. Skipwith explains:

> ...that an extraordinary elongation of the spine might cause a resemblance to a tail is not without its fascination for lovers of monstrosities, and those deeply involved amongst the intricacies of ethnology, anthropology, etc; whose lives, minds, and thoughts, are surrendered with the devotion of the Indian Fahkir to the arduous search after the missing link (Skipwith 1875).

Skipwith proceeds to spin a yarn of his discovery of a hidden valley of men with tails, his adventures with the 'tribe' and his escape and return to civilisation. As the story develops it is difficult to untangle the literary and scientific complications. For example, Skipwith remarks:

> They [the tribe of men with tails] are a grossly sensual and beastly race of beings, but though not wanting at times in bestial ferocity, they are as a rule, quiet and inoffensive, going about looking for food in a dreamy manner, more like monkeys than human beings. Human life has little respect among them, though individually they fear the pain of death or any pain, and when afflicted the strongest of them will yell moan and fight, bite, and scratch and give themselves up to all the frantic insensible passion and abandonment of a brute and much worse than any brute (Skipwith 1875).

What is not altogether clear is the extent to which the passage makes the story about men with tails a shared hoax within the convention of a traveller's tall tale. Nevertheless, what is significant is that within its framework of true fiction Skipwith's story defines Borneo and Sarawak as a location where the traveller can meet indigenous people who represent the supposed link between Western peoples, defined as a racial group and their possible primate ancestors.[12]

The lead article of *The Sarawak Gazette* for 1 February 1875 describes similar stories of 'men with tails' told by 'natives':

> But the interior of the Island is still a *terra incognita*, and the strangest stories are told and believed by the natives of the wonders to be found there, remarkably high mountains, lakes, wild tribes, men with tails, etc (*The Sarawak Gazette* 1 February 1875).

The comment in *The Sarawak Gazette* is a reminder that wild Borneo is a strange place by Western standards, that local people themselves have traditionally seen Borneo as

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[12] The fictional tribe seems somewhat similar to the Yahoos of Jonathon Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (first published in 1725) and the land of the Yahoos was in the same general area (Greenberg 1970).

strange and that traditional local culture includes mythical links between men and animals. Like Skipwith's story it illustrates some of the most basic tenets of the nineteenth century tradition of wild Borneo, that for the West the combination of the great Borneo forests, the abundance of wild creatures (particularly the orang-utan) and 'natives' who were headhunters, became a site of strange and romantic difference which came to be seen as an exemplary version of 'the wild', like an original Darwinian site or a last refuge. Fundamental to this view is the fact that the orang-utan is one of the most remarkable of the great apes and one of the wild animals which became most well known in the West from early in the modern period, with a reputation for being human-like.[13]

Waiting for the Tide links the theme of the strange people of Borneo with the other main theme of headhunting. Figure 8 below is an extract from the illustration entitled *Sarawak History* included as the frontispiece.[14] The image shows a Dayak girl being speared by a fierce-faced Dayak warrior. On the left there is a miniature portrait of the woman, while, on the right, there is a skull - a clear reference to head trophies (*antu pala*)[15] and the fate of the woman shown being speared.

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[13] A contributing factor to this view is that in Malay orang-utan (*orang hutan*) means 'the man of the jungle'.

[14] Figure 8 reproduces only the centre section image of the frontispiece illustration. The larger image (see Appendix E) contains four other smaller images including: an image entitled, 'Present-"Minta arrack Tuan (Sir can I have some arrack)"' showing a Dayak warrior clutching his stomach and standing in a Western-style residence; an image entitled 'Future We Fear', showing two Dayak men drawn to resemble monkeys with distended stomachs shown with an empty bottle to indicate they are drunk; an image entitled 'Future-He Hopes', showing two Dayak men dressed in European clothes (including one wearing a top hat) while a European woman presents both men with a basket filled with bottles (presumably arrack); and an image titled 'Future-We Hope', which shows a Dayak man ploughing a field in front of a Western-style house situated on a small hill drawn in the background.

[15] These are, literally, human skulls wrapped in loose rattan frames and hung from the roof of the longhouse.

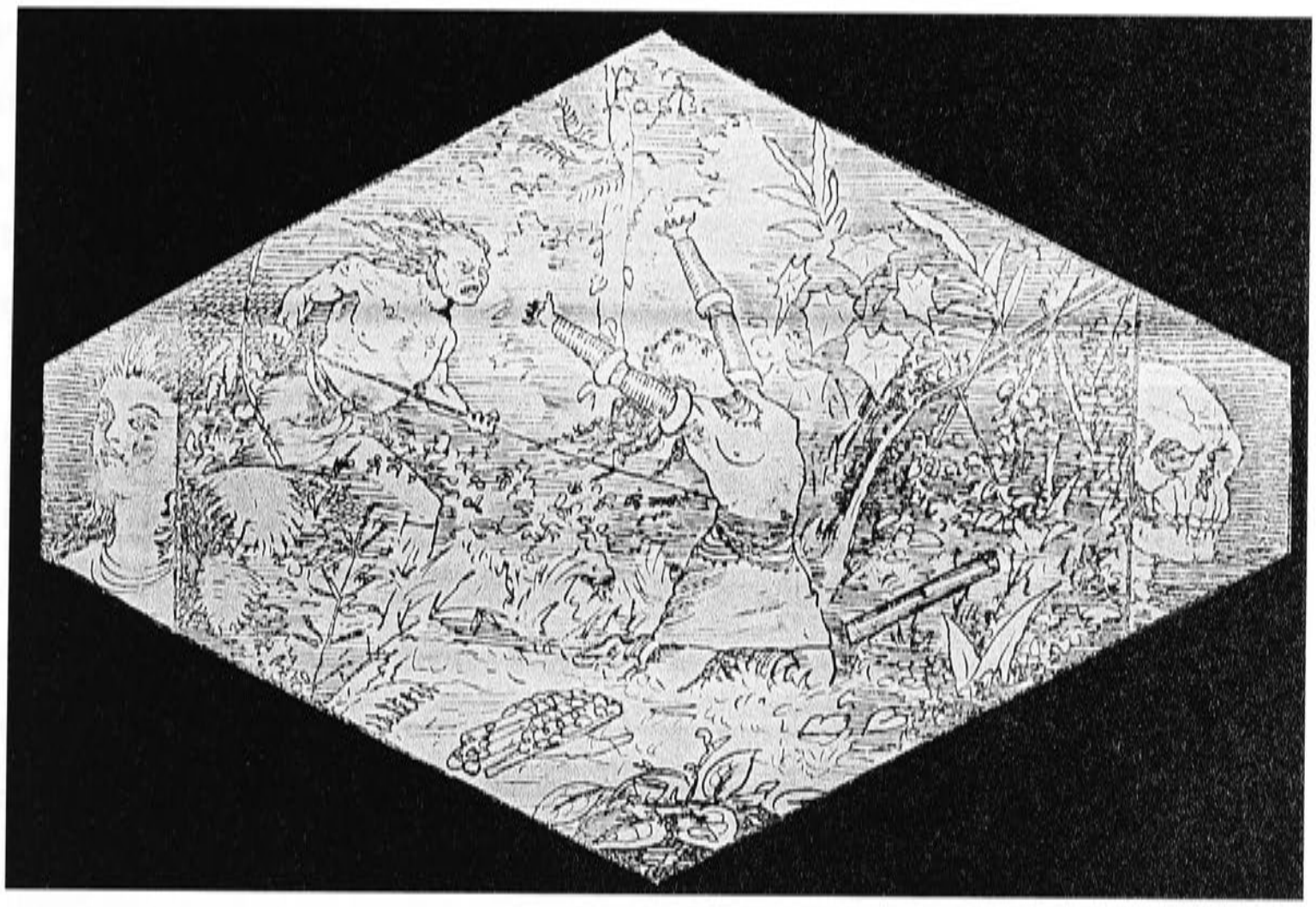

Figure 8: Extract from Frontispiece illustration in *Waiting for the Tide or Scraps and Scrawls from Sarawak* (1875).

At least four of the stories in *Waiting for the Tide* include references to headhunting and the frontispiece is obviously intended as a dramatic general illustration. *Waiting for the Tide* is further clear evidence of the themes of 'headhunting' and 'headhunters', which have become ubiquitous in Western travel literature about Borneo and part of an historical and imagined Western travel itinerary in wild Borneo. In the Sarawak longhouse tour industry tour guides use head trophies as a key signifier to indicate the authentic status of a longhouse as the residence of former headhunters. For example, in Stamang, when the community first started with organised tourism, following directions from the tour company, old head trophies were brought out from storage and re-hung in the *ruai* so tour guides could point to them and recall the days of headhunting.

The Head-Hunters Of Borneo (1881)

The Head-Hunters of Borneo by Carl Bock published in 1881 is one of the most widely-known early accounts of travel in Borneo by a Western author.[16] The Dutch colonial government commissioned Bock's travels in Borneo with the broad 'scientific' aim of collecting 'fauna' specimens and to 'report upon the native races of the interior' (Bock 1985:v), although his narrative style and observations are closer to an adventure novel.

In addition to being a substantive account of the people and places he visited at that time, *The Head-Hunters of Borneo* is an early example of marketing an account of travel in Borneo by sensationalising the island using references to headhunters and wild people.[17] For example, as Figure 9 shows, in addition to the sensational claims of the narrative, the illustrations were designed to appeal to a readership familiar with Borneo as a site for wild people.

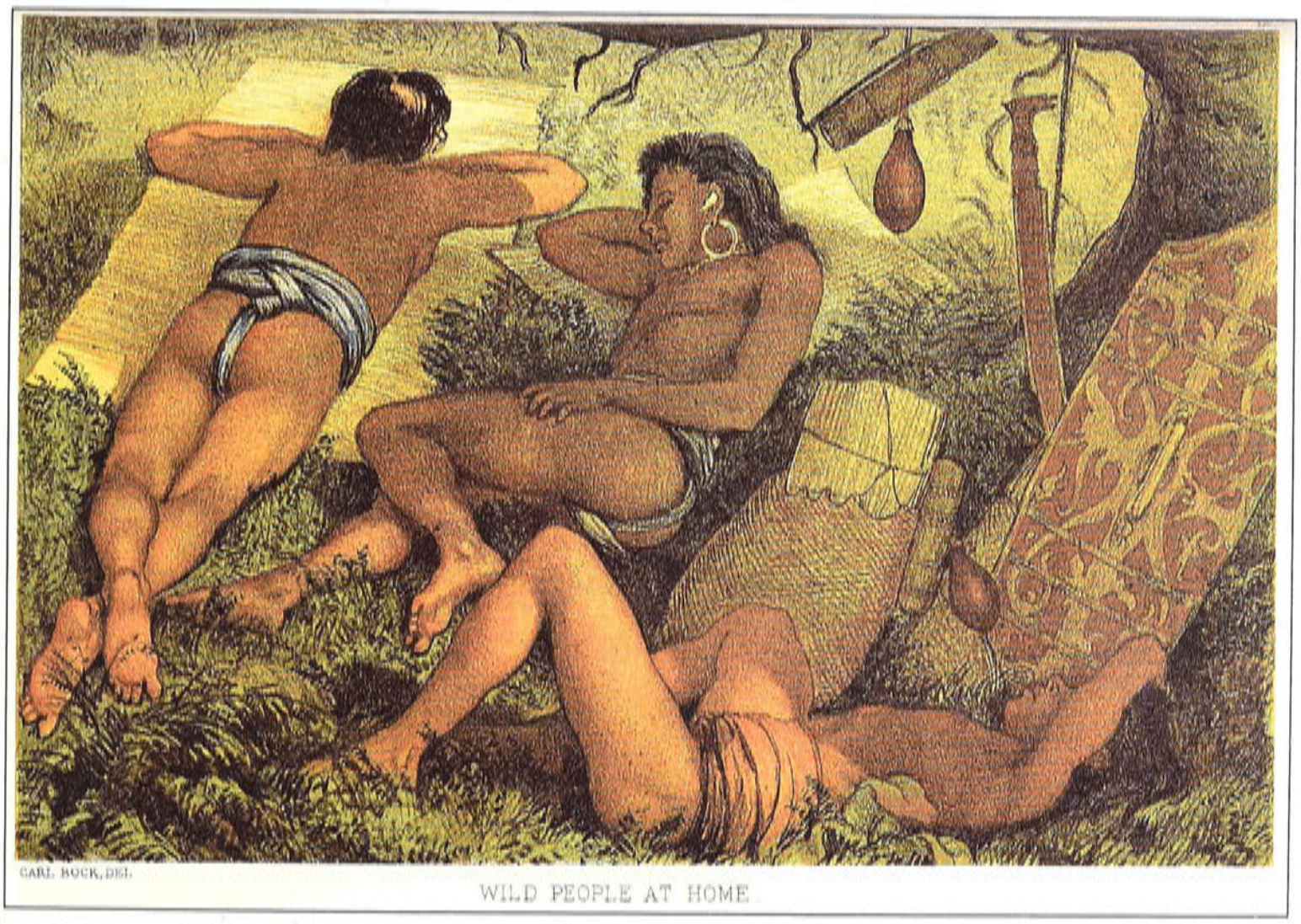

Figure 9: Illustration from *The Head-Hunters of Borneo* by Carl Bock published in 1881.

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[16] Carl Bock was a Norwegian explorer and naturalist who travelled extensively in Dutch Borneo and Sumatra from 1878 to 1880.

[17] R. H. W Reece comments in the introduction to the 1985 Oxford University edition of Bock's book that he is 'fairly confident' that Bock chose the title. He notes that the initial popularity of the book resulted in a reprint in 1882, a German edition printed in 1882 and a Norwegian edition printed in 1883.

The illustrations are significant evidence that images of Borneo people were integrated into the continuing Western tradition of images of naked wild people that romanticised as well as classified (as scientific typology) the bodies of non-Western indigenous peoples.[18] King notes in *The Best of Borneo Travel*, 'Bock was clearly attempting to generate excitement and a sense of adventure, dwelling on the exotic and sensational' (King 1992:151). Further, in the introduction to the 1985 Oxford University edition of Bock's book, Reece presents Bock's work as a 'pioneering' example of a 'genre' of travel writing on Borneo that 'garnishes' fact with fiction and which continues to affect the way Borneo is represented:

> Bock's main interest was the exotic and the sensational...Hardly a year has gone by without at least one book describing the adventure of some indefatigable traveller braving the Borneo jungle as if no one had ever done it before. Of these, journeys across the entire island have the greatest cachet, although fact is sometimes liberally garnished with fiction. Bock's book is a pioneering work in this genre and stands up well in any comparison with later travellers' narratives. It has probably had a wider circulation than any other book on Borneo (Bock 1985:viii-x).

Reece's comments support a view of a tradition linking the past fabrication of wild Borneo and the present construction of wild Borneo, a tradition which continues to be transmitted through travel writing and other popular genres.[19]

Bock was preoccupied with Darwinian notions of racial evolution and he writes that at one stage during his journey he was duped into heading off in search of a mysterious race of men with tails. Bock's account of his attempt to find the tribe of men with tails only six years after Skipwith's story confirms that Borneo was seen as a defining site for the discovery of missing link 'tribes'. Unlike Skipwith, Bock does not claim to have encountered the tribe of men with tails, but his narrative does not explicitly discount their existence and, like in the stories in *Waiting For the Tide*, Bock leaves open the question as to whether his story should be interpreted as fact or fantasy. In the following passage, Bock discusses his thoughts prior to setting off to look for the race of men with

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[18] Paul Gauguin's paintings are an example of the romantic view (see footnote 23, Chapter Five). Ferdinand Lesueur and Nicolas-Martin Petit's illustrations of Australian Aborigines in Francois Peron's account of the French voyage of exploration to Australia (1801-1804) are a major early example of the scientific style (Peron 1807, 1817).

[19] Janet Hoskins notes in the introduction to her book, *Headhunting and the Social Imagination in South East Asia*, 'Nineteenth-century travellers and explorers published a series of accounts of encounters with headhunters in the jungle of South East Asia that were widely read and discussed (Bock 1881; Furness 1902; Haddon 1901; Hose 1927)' (Hoskins 1996:1).

tails. His comments illustrate his interest in Darwinian notions of racial evolution and his awareness of a wider set of ideas about what might be involved in a visit to Borneo, including the discovery of the missing link:

> The conversation about the tailed race brought back to my mind various rumours about this "missing link" in the Darwinian chain which had reached me at different times during my travels in Borneo, and I determined if possible to settle the point one way or another. The question has often occurred to me whether Mr. Darwin received the first suggestions of his theory of man's simian descent from the fables concerning the existence of tailed men which obtain so much credence among so many uncivilised people; or whether the natives of the Malay Archipelago and the South Sea Islands, having read the "Descent of Man" have conspired together to hoax the white man with well-concocted stories of people possessing tails, living in inaccessible districts, and maintaining but slight intercourse with the outside world (Bock 1985:144).

While it is possible that local people defined other ethnic groups on the island as different and backward (especially as this is frequently the case today), Bock's reflection that in 1879-1880 local people may have read Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man* and were using its theories to hoodwink Westerners into believing stories about the missing link seems to be a joke. Bock's comments suggest a highly developed nineteenth century awareness of Borneo as a nexus of science, exploration, and fantasy, with the potential for misinformation and even hoax. In this way, Bock's text points to continuities between the developing sophistication of the nineteenth century view of Borneo and the recent transformations of the theme of wild Borneo in the longhouse tourism industry. The recent versions of the tradition in the tourism industry involve the presence of a complicated network of reality, fabrication and manipulation and a spectrum of views and ideas ranging from a lack of critical awareness to an intense analytical awareness of the idea of wild Borneo.

The process of cross-fertilisation between fiction and reality was further highlighted in *The Sarawak Gazette* of 1 March 1882 in relation to Bock's claims in *The Head-Hunters of Borneo* that cannibalism was a custom of the Punan people. The article in the *Gazette* is concerned with the need for further exploration of the interior of Borneo and for more accurate reporting. It notes that:

> The records of travellers should be most carefully weighed before being circulated, any wrong or false information unless offered in a purely suggestive light, is liable to misguide millions of people for generations. Mr Bock speaks in his late work [*The Head-Hunters of Borneo*] of cannibalism existing in Borneo among the Punan...Seeing how anxious travellers are to seize on something strange and wonderful to relate in order to bring themselves before the publicit would

> be a very laudable enterprise for any person or even for the Dutch government…to find out if the Battaks near Java really are guilty of being cannibals. (*The Sarawak Gazette* 1 March 1882).

The concern that 'strange and wonderful' reports about Sarawak and Borneo will create a sensationalised view of Borneo in the future is prophetic. In addition, the comment in the *Gazette* is an indication that the tradition of wild Borneo develops in a context which includes opposition to extravagant claims about a mysterious island of primeval wonders.

The Sarawak Gazette (1893)

From 1870 to 1908 *The Sarawak Gazette* was the official gazette of the Brooke government and included government and legal notices, news, entertainment and advertising material. From 1908 *The Sarawak Government Gazette* became the official government gazette, while *The Sarawak Gazette* continued as a general news, entertainment and advertising publication. Accordingly, *The Sarawak Gazette* is a primary source for Sarawak history and it provides a direct insight into the attitude of the Sarawak Government on various Sarawak-related issues, particularly during the period of Brooke rule.

On 1 December 1893, the *Gazette* published a lead story discussing an article entitled 'Civilising the Dayaks', published the same year in London in the *Globe* newspaper.[20] The *Globe* article, which the *Gazette* reproduces in full, begins:

> The Dayak is a collector of human heads, and his reputation swells in proportion to the dimensions of the pyramidal pile of skulls upon his door-steps. In order to quench this ardour of collecting which possesses the Dayak mind measures of more than ordinary ingenuity are required. The romantic history of Rajah Brooke's rule in Sarawak teems with references to Dayak customs, and no custom is more firmly rooted as that of head hunting (*The Sarawak Gazette,* 1 December 1893).

The *Globe* article refers to a 'district officer' who claims that he organises boating races between rival 'tribes' as a substitute for 'head taking'. The races are described as a great success, with headhunting all but eradicated from the district:

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[20] The lead story, or editorial, has no title, following the format of lead stories in the *Sarawak Gazette* at the time.

> When, as happens, occasionally a head is taken, the offender excuses himself upon the ground that the deceased was but an indifferent oarsman, and would not be missed. One cannot hope to change the habits of a generation in a day (*The Sarawak Gazette*, 1 December 1893).

The Sarawak Gazette refutes the *Globe* article as entirely inaccurate and untruthful (which it was). Nevertheless, it is evidence that by 1893 a view of Borneo as a place of sensational extremes of wild people and wild nature had entered the popular press in Europe, a development which is evidence of early mass circulation of the tradition.

The reports in the *Globe* and the *Gazette* further illustrate the contradictions and transformations that accompany the development of the tradition of wild Borneo. In the story in the *Globe* the 'Dayaks' who exchange headhunting for boat races remain wild within the modern world. On the other hand, they respond to games with an enthusiasm that echoes the English public school system and are capable of civilised behaviour according to the standards of imperial, nineteenth century England. *The Gazette* is interesting for its concern to refute the story[21] and raises the possibility that the Brooke government may have been ambivalent about the growth of the theme of wild Borneo as part of the legend of the 'romantic history of Rajah Brooke's rule'. On the one hand, headhunting and other signs of savagery might be seen to legitimise the Brooke administration and the need for colonial control. On the other hand, it may have been seen as evidence of the failure of the Brooke regime to effectively 'civilise the Dayaks'. An historical irony is that the Brooke regime itself became one of the main elements of the romance of Borneo.

Joseph Conrad

Joseph Conrad's work bridges the nineteenth and twentieth century themes of wild Borneo and elaborates it in the form of classic literary fiction. His short stories and novels are key documents in the transmission of the tradition of wild Borneo. Conrad

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[21] The *Gazette* states: 'Civilising the Dayaks, a cutting from the London *Globe*, which we publish below, fairly entitles the writer to the historical kettle. "One of the Rajah's lieutenants", who is said to give such valuable information to the writer of the yarn, should be proud to find that the shaft from his longbow, if ever he loosed it, has struck such high game as a London news-paper. Doubtless the writer himself gave too much play to his imagination

makes Borneo a prime site for literature about a confrontation between the West and a romantic Eastern world of the wild and primitive. At the same time his writing recirculates the nineteenth century tradition of wild Borneo in a form that is critical and analytical. Conrad's fiction questions the nature of the wild and the nature of 'civilised' Western humanity. His fictional Borneo presents a major literary meditation on the nineteenth century debate about evolution, Western civilisation, imperialism and the wild.

Conrad wrote a number of short stories and novels set in Borneo, including *Almayer's Folly* (Conrad 1925c) (first published in 1895), *An Outcast of the Islands* (Conrad 1925a) (first published in 1896), *Lord Jim* (Conrad 1964) (first published in 1917) and *The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows* (Conrad 1925b) (first published in 1920).[22] He visited Borneo in 1887, as chief mate of the trading steamer *Vidar*, on which he made four round trips from Singapore to the Celebes (Sulawesi) along the south and east coasts of Borneo, including a trip of at least 40 miles up the Berau River to Tanjung Redeb on the east coast of Borneo (Meyers 1991:76-9). These four voyages became the basis for his continuing focus on Borneo in his fiction, written between 1889 and 1920. On the other hand, scholars estimate that he spent 'only twelve days or so on land in Borneo' (Meyers 1991:123), or not 'more than a month or two actually in Borneo' (Knowles and Moore 2000:44). To support what he had seen, Conrad used a wide range of reading about Borneo, including Alfred Russel Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago* (1869), despite the fact that Wallace describes Sarawak and Conrad never visited Sarawak (Knowles and Moore 2000:44, 396).

As narrative, Conrad's Borneo writing is about adventure, romance and encounters between 'the West' and 'the East'. He restates the tradition of wild Borneo with restraint and imaginative force. For example, while 'Dayaks' feature in several stories, he does not elaborate the theme of headhunters in a sensational way. His stories

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and is solely to blame for, not only the untruth of the whole story, which appears to be given seriously, but for the very inaccurate details of which it is built up' (*Sarawak Gazette*: 1 December 1893).

[22] All of Conrad's Bornean novels are set in the nineteenth century. While some were first published in the 1890s and some in the first two decades of the twentieth century, they have also been extensively reprinted since that time and the references used in this thesis are generally to later editions.

dramatise the island as a strange wilderness of mysterious channels leading into a largely unknown, jungle-covered interior, primeval forest, remote settlements, local rulers and tribes and the lives of flawed European traders and adventurers. In addition, his focus is on issues about character, morality, civilisation and fate that confronts his European protagonists, and there are parallels between the landscape of Conrad's Borneo and his themes.

Lord Jim is an excellent example of Conrad's themes and perspectives. It provides a detailed account of Patusan, a fictional place modelled on his experience of the Berau River and Tanjung Redeb, and includes a highly developed narrative that is an analytical summary of the nineteenth century view of Borneo as a place in which primeval nature survives in the modern world. Patusan parallels Borneo settings in Conrad's other stories and some readers and critics see Patusan as Borneo (Meyers 1991:198), while others believe that the location of Patusan is a puzzle with multiple solutions, including north-west Sumatra (Knowles and Moore 2000:271-2). This puzzle merges with other puzzles about the wild and civilisation and with a general view of Borneo and the Indonesian archipelago as a strange and romantic world. The Patusan section of *Lord Jim* involves a repetitive version of the itinerary of a trip to Borneo as a journey from the coast along a river to an inland native settlement. It includes detailed descriptions of the coast, of the journey along the river with 'alligators' and 'monkeys' and of the settlement.

In *Lord Jim*, Conrad makes the people of Borneo a mixed group of 'Malay' traders and colonists, with non-Muslim indigenous people (referred to as 'Dayaks') represented by the 'tribes in the interior' (Conrad 1964:184-96). The three main groups of people in the narrative are the 'Malay' Rajah, the 'Malays' from the Celebes and the 'bush-folk', all of whom merge in a general view of people who are linked with the primeval past of humanity. Conrad's view of the people is sharply divergent: while the 'Malay' Rajah is war-like and treacherous, Dain Waris, the son of the leader of the group from the Celebes, reveals 'to the Western eye … the hidden possibilities of races and lands over which hangs the mystery of unrecorded ages'; and he is the ultimate noble savage and 'the very origin of friendship' (Conrad 1964:199).

The repetitive accounts of the setting increase the view that Patusan is a point of entry to a world in which primeval nature and wildness survive. For example, the view of the coast of Patusan includes 'immovable forests ... everlasting in the shadowy might of their tradition, like life itself' and the journey down river seems to lead through 'the very heart of untouched wilderness' (a phrase which parallels Conrad's view of Africa in *Heart of Darkness*) (Conrad 1948:184,249). Conrad uses phrases such as 'shadows', 'the assault of the dark powers' and 'inconceivable mystery' (Conrad 1964:187). The account links the natural environment and the people as an ancient reality different to civilisation and the West. *Lord Jim* is a threatening and tragic summary of the nineteenth century themes of adventure, the wild and 'the descent of man' that merge with the tradition of tourism.

Conrad's fiction involves a close interest in the history of Borneo and he makes widespread use of the life of James Brooke and the lives of other adventurers in Borneo.[23] Jim in *Lord Jim* is derived in part from James Brooke, in part from William Lingard and his nephews (Knowles and Moore 2000:204-6) and in part from William Olmeijer (Knowles and Moore 2000:260). The plot of *Lord Jim* borrows extensively from James Brooke's early experience in Sarawak (Knowles and Moore 2000: 48-49).[24] *Lord Jim* is not the only one of Conrad's works that refer to the life of James Brooke. For example, as Gordan (1938) noted in a pioneering paper:

> It was clear from the indirect allusions in *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast*, and *The Rescue* that Conrad was interested in Brooke...the novelist had read widely [in] Brookiana...Keppel's *Borneo*, Mundy's *Borneo and Celebes*, and Brooke's letters seem to have been particularly useful...It seems logical to assume that the Raja of Sarawak inspired Conrad's imagination to a lesser or a greater extent in all the important work of his early period...It is a fitting tribute to both men that one of the great romantic personalities of the nineteenth century may have inspired one of the great romantic novelists (Gordan 1938: 623-624).

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[23] From the late 1840s several accounts of James Brooke's adventures in Sarawak were available (see, for example, Brooke (1842, 1848, 1853), Mundy (1848), Low (1848), Keppel (1853a, 1853b), Templer (1853), (Brooke 1866) and Jacob (1876)). Furthermore, it should be noted that James Brooke's accounts of his experiences in Sarawak are themselves significant early texts in the tradition of wild Borneo.

[24] For example, in the second half of the book Jim, through a blend of bravery and luck, defeats a cruel Malay ruler of a small river state on a large island somewhere in the Malay speaking world, and eventually, though involuntarily, becomes ruler himself.

In *The Rescue* Conrad alludes to Brooke in a way that identifies him as an historical figure and centres him in a narrative of noble colonialism and romantic adventure:

> The adventurers who began the struggle have left no descendants…But even far into the present century they have had their successors. Almost in our own day we have seen one of them- a true adventurer in his devotion to his impulse - a man of high mind and of pure heart, lay the foundation of a flourishing state on the ideas of pity and justice. He recognised chivalrously the claims of the conquered; he was a disinterested adventurer, and the reward of his noble instincts is the veneration with which a strange and faithful race cherish his memory.
>
> …the glory of his achievement has vindicated the purity of his motives. He belongs to history. But there were others – obscure adventurers who had not his advantages of birth, position, and intelligence; who had only his sympathy with the people of the forests and the sea he understood and loved so well….But the wasted lives, for the few who know, have tinged with romance the region of shallow waters and forest-clad islands, that lies far east… (Conrad 1925b:5-6).

Recent interdisciplinary studies have focussed on the connections between Conrad's fiction and the wider cultural history that includes Darwin, the rise of anthropology and the transition from colonialism to the idea of the West. Redmond O'Hanlon (1984) stresses that the account of Lord Jim as a colonial hero is ambiguous and includes a perspective which presents him as subject to 'his own inner beast' and deteriorating to the kind of primeval savagery associated with *The Descent of Man* and Darwin's view of Borneo as a remote refuge for earlier progenitors of mankind (O'Hanlon 1984:57,77-81).[25] James Clifford (1988) comments on Conrad in *The Predicament of Culture* in relation to the cultural construction of identity (Clifford 1988:10). Partly in response to *The Predicament of Culture*, John W. Griffith (1995) elaborates the anthropological context of Conrad's life and writing. Griffith explains Conrad's Borneo fictions and *The Heart of Darkness* in the context of the rise of anthropology and a late nineteenth century 'anthropological dilemma' defined as a cultural anxiety and ambivalence in the West about its relation to 'primitive' societies. For Griffith the events and themes of *Lord Jim* parallel the rise of anthropology and the theory of field studies and cultural relativism (Griffith 1995:1-11, 46-71). Griffith demonstrates that Conrad's Patusan encourages a view of Borneo that is both attractive and threatening: as an exemplary world of the primitive and wild seen in terms of Edenic origins and cultural degeneration; and as a place where the Western adventurer and traveller can either master the wild or 'go native' and degenerate into 'savagery' (Griffith 1995:152-78,

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[25] O'Hanlon also wrote the Borneo travel narrative *Into the Heart of Borneo* (1985).

223). In addition, Christopher Gogwilt (1995) explains Conrad's Borneo as a record of the transition from empire and colonialism to a new constellation of competing assumptions about 'race, nature, and culture' grouped around the idea of the West (Gogwilt 1995:88-9).

Conrad's Borneo fiction is evidence that the nineteenth century defines Borneo as an ultimate destination, a place of primeval mysteries and romantic adventure, a place where primeval humanity and nature survive. According to this tradition, in Borneo the adventurer and traveller confront both the romance and the dark mysteries of the wild and its relation to Western civilisation.

A discourse of wild Borneo

The nineteenth century texts raise the possibility of approaching the tradition of understanding and representation involved in the transmission of the theme of wild Borneo as a 'discourse' of wild Borneo. The text can be understood according to Said's definition of Orientalism as a 'style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the Occident' (Said 1978:2). Said presents Orientalism as a term describing a discourse that categorises, locates and creates the Orient in a way that has systematically allowed the West to justify its colonisation of the Orient. He defines Orientalism as an overarching meta-discourse which establishes European identity and power in opposition to the Orient and includes many micro-discourses, that is, particular genres, types of knowledge, or locations, which have their own system or logic for categorising (and appropriating) the Orient (Said 1978:1-28). According to this model, the tradition of wild Borneo can be understood as a discourse of wild Borneo which is a micro-discourse of Orientalism. The nineteenth century texts that have been discussed above demonstrate this approach. For example, the term 'headhunting' (or 'headhunters') signifies wild Borneo but also signifies, more generally, ideas of 'savageness', and 'uncivilised' people and places, which are defining assumptions of Orientalism.

Said describes Orientalism as a 'discourse' following Foucault's use of the term, and echoes Foucault's concern with the relations between language, representation, power structures, the creation of identity and the possibility for individual freedoms.[26] In addition, Said stresses that Orientalism is a linguistically-based, discursive structure (following Saussure) that has defined and continues to define how the West experiences the East (Said 1978:3). Said explains the relationship between discourse, text and lived experience with reference to the two renowned French 'Orientalists', Napoleon and deLesseps:

> Everything they knew, more or less, about the Orient came from books written in the tradition of Orientalism, placed in its library of *idees recues*; for them the Orient, like the fierce lion, was something to be encountered and dealt with to a certain extent because the texts made that Orient possible. Such an Orient was silent, available to Europe for the realisation of projects that involved but were never directly responsible to the native inhabitants, and unable to resist the projects, images or mere descriptions devised for it (Said 1978:94-95).

Said's Orientalism is a Western way of understanding the East that focuses attention on the relationship between discourse and a wide range of texts and experiences, each containing a set of received ideas (a 'library of *idees recues*') that shape the experience of reality and the process of history. This model is relevant to the nineteenth century Western accounts of Borneo because they too show that a set of ideas, terms and images about Borneo were in place in Western culture at a distance from the reality of Borneo (perhaps most obviously with the report about headhunters and boat races in the London *Globe*). The texts also show that assumptions about the wild and Borneo could shape and filter experience within Borneo, as with Graham's tendency to see 'Dayaks' in relation to other 'natives' (as 'braves'), and his interest in stories (real or invented) about headhunting on the romantic 'Kalakah Sands'.

Said's concern with colonialism as a defining context for Western ways of understanding and representation is also relevant to the history of wild Borneo. Said observes that the period of Orientalism's greatest advance, and the birth of the oriental scholar, coincided with the period in which European colonial expansion was at its height, from approximately 1815 to 1915 (Said 1978:41). The initial establishment of the Brooke regime in Sarawak (1839-41) occurred during this time and, although

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[26] See Foucault (1989) *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and Foucault (1979) *Discipline and Punish*.

Sarawak was not a British colony, the Brooke Empire was undeniably part of the cultural empire of Britain and the West and within the scope of influence of Orientalism. Indeed, the story of James Brooke gaining sovereignty over Sarawak and founding Brooke rule is itself a powerful, nineteenth century parable illustrating the possibilities for Western adventure and rule over the Orient.

On the other hand, Said's emphasis on colonialism is one of the most obvious restrictions of his account of Orientalism. Said reads Orientalism as an imperial structure and he does so with a political agenda of his own. In my view the challenge is to adapt Said's variation on discourse theory and at the same time avoid the dangers of a limited kind of political interpretation. One of the limitations of Said's theory is that it perpetuates the idea of a passive Orient, whereas the Borneo tourist industry involves the assimilation of wild Borneo to contemporary Bornean initiatives. There is also a need to avoid a Foucault-derived model of interpretation that sees discourse as total meaning. The aim here is to gain from Said's account of Orientalism and, in particular, to focus on the advantages of reference to a wide range of texts in order to trace a tradition of wild Borneo which is shaped by discourse and representation as key factors within a wide range of changing historical experience.

The twentieth century

The context for twentieth century transformations of the tradition of wild Borneo includes the breakdown of colonialism after World War II, the rise of new forms of capitalism and technological development in Asia and the progressive assimilation of Asia into the new world of twentieth century consumerism, media mass culture and global markets. The twentieth century saw the end of traditional Western colonialism and the rise of nationalism and cultural internationalism within the framework of international capitalism. This local and international environment informs present-day Sarawak and longhouse tourism. The range of twentieth century wild Borneo texts includes films such as *Borneo* (discussed below), popular travel books, and tourism brochures and advertising texts (discussed elsewhere in this thesis), as well as the

widespread dissemination of literary texts, such as those by Conrad and Maugham. One of the main developments is the continuation and transmission of wild Borneo in the texts of twentieth century mass culture, with the effect that wild Borneo becomes part of the global commodity and consumer culture of the twentieth century. In this context, Borneo continues to be seen as a place of wild nature, where primeval jungle, animals and people survive.

One of the features of the twentieth century tradition is the assimilation of wild Borneo and debate about science and evolution into twentieth century mass culture. The popular Western view of Sarawak is defined largely in terms of continuing wild Borneo themes about the origins of human civilisation, headhunters and the romance and dangers of the wild. The Sarawak and longhouse tour marketing (discussed in the following chapter) uses the same themes, with strategic revision of the theme of the unknown and the danger associated with the wild.

Furthermore, the twentieth century is marked by the development of a scientific, historical and conservationist approach to understanding South-East Asia, in publications such as Daws' and Fujita's *Archipelago: The Islands of Indonesia*, which provides an account of the nineteenth century travels of Alfred Russel Wallace and a photographic survey of the forests, birds and animals of Borneo and Indonesia (Daws and Fujita 1999). The continuing emphasis on travel to Borneo and tours of the wild is accompanied by a change from earlier views about a generic population of wild 'Malays' and 'Sea Dayaks' to more precise awareness of the peoples of Malaysia and increasing interest in the Iban and their longhouses. The Iban become a focus for a set of themes about exploration, discovery and nostalgic and consciously theatrical tourism to the wild.

Significantly, the changes to the tradition are accompanied by substantial continuity. In general, as the tradition of wild Borneo has been filtered through twentieth century mass culture, one direction is towards standardisation of the main themes into generic stereotypes (as mass culture concepts imitate commercial brand-names and advertisement formulae). For example, the headhunters of Borneo and 'the wild man of

Borneo' are powerful twentieth century stereotypes, especially the latter, which has become a commonplace reference with something like proverbial status. In the first half of the twentieth century the references still include memories of the circuses of childhood, as in the 1927 American travel memoir *In Borneo Jungles: Among the Dyak Hunters*, in which William Krohn says that the main inspiration for his trip to the 'savages' of Borneo was the fact that 'the freak of freaks in all circuses was the Wild Man from Borneo' (Krohn 1927:4).

Somerset Maugham

Maugham's Borneo stories deal with the period between the two world wars. They include reference to Sarawak, under the Third Raja, Vyner Brooke, and British North Borneo, now Sabah. Maugham's Borneo stories are part of a larger group of stories he wrote about China and colonial South-East Asia, based on trips in which he gathered material for his writing. During 1919 and 1920 he visited China and returned to London via Shanghai and Hong Kong. In 1921, from March to August, he visited the Federated Malay States, spending time in Singapore, with a side trip to Borneo. Later in the year he travelled in Java. In Borneo, Maugham visited Kuching, went upriver and visited 'Dayak' longhouses (Morgan 1980: 242-61)[27]. He was an extremely popular author whose works bridged the division between literary fiction and mass culture and his works retain a popular appeal to the present. Kuching bookshops still stock recent (English-language) reprints of Maugham's Malaysian stories for sale to tourists and locals.

Maugham's South-East Asia is mainly an account of the scandals, crimes and decadence of British colonial society. It is a representation of colonialism at a point where the sophistication, relativism and disillusionment of the 1920s and 1930s add to questions about the colonial enterprise, with an emphasis on events that were usually based on real scandals.

Maugham's accounts of twentieth century colonialism involve variations on or clever revisions of themes from the past and his accounts of Borneo and Sarawak include references to earlier accounts such as Conrad's. Maugham plays with the idea of the romance of Borneo and Conrad's dark and mysterious wild Borneo. His characters reflect the fact that the Borneo they expect from their reading is not the Borneo they experience when they first arrive. For example, in *Before the Party* the protagonist experiences her arrival in Borneo as the opposite of her expectations based on 'the novels':

> From the novels she had read she expected the rivers of Borneo to be dark and strangely sinister, but the sky was blue, dappled with little white clouds, and the green of the mangroves and the nipahs, washed by the flowing water glistened in the sun. On each side stretched the pathless jungle, and in the distance, silhouetted against the sky, was the rugged outline of a mountain (Maugham 1951 Volume One:115).

Maugham's most impressive Borneo story is *Neil MacAdam*, which includes literary variations on *Lord Jim*. Neil MacAdam shares Jim's youth and his sense of the romance of the East. As his ship travels towards Borneo he re-reads his copy of Wallace's *Malay Archipelago*, and when he arrives in 'Kuala Sor', the capital of Maugham's Borneo, his reaction is similar to the protagonist's in *Before the Party*, with the addition of a reference to Conrad:

> Now they were steaming upriver...beyond stretched the dense green of the virgin forest. In the distance, darkly silhouetted against the blue sky, was the rugged outline of a mountain. Neil, his heart beating with the excitement that possessed him, devoured the scene with eager eyes. He was surprised. He knew his Conrad almost by heart and he was expecting a land of brooding mystery. He was not prepared for the blue milky sky (Maugham 1951:1538).

In *Neil Macadam*, the traditional theme of a journey upriver in Borneo is repeated with an emphasis on the beauty of the river. 'The Dayaks' and longhouses become part of an account of idyllic travel in Borneo. Maugham's 'dayaks' are congenial and welcoming and presented in a way that is continued through the twentieth century, with an emphasis on their hospitality, drinking and entertaining dance. For example, the quotation from *Neil MacAdam* used as an epigraph for this chapter presents the 'dayaks' as hosts who celebrate the visit of a group of travellers with 'arrak, eloquence and a fantastic dance'. Maugham re-writes the tradition of the romance of Borneo in a way

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[27] Pringle (1970) states that Maugham visited Sri Aman and that the story 'The Yellow Streak' is about the Batang

that gives authority to the view that the jungle and a visit upriver to a Dayak longhouse are a combination of romantic wildness and an ultimate tourist wonderland (Maugham 1951:1556).

Maugham's knowing variation on Borneo stereotypes foreshadows further transformations of wild Borneo in the twentieth century, in particular, the recirculation of the romance of wild Borneo in twentieth century mass culture and its appropriation for tourism. *Neil Macadam* is a variation on Conrad's 'land of brooding mystery', with the effect that the darker themes of the tradition of wild Borneo are simultaneously denied, reversed and retained, along with the romance of the wild. Maugham's fiction provides the twentieth century reading public with a readable, widely-available version of both the romance of Borneo and the threat of the darkness and danger of wild Borneo.

Pheasant Jungles (1927)

Pheasant Jungles is a travel book recounting William Beebe's experiences in Sri Lanka, the Indian Himalayas, Burma, Tibet and Sarawak, while gathering material for a monograph on pheasants.[28]

Pheasant Jungles includes a chapter titled 'With The Dayaks of Borneo' in which Beebe provides an anecdotal account of his experience in Sarawak collecting zoological specimens and working and staying with longhouse people. As travel writing and popular zoology *Pheasant Jungles* is a relatively poor work. However, Beebe's comments on Sarawak provide evidence of the transmission of the tradition of wild Borneo in twentieth century popular texts, particularly the continuation of Darwinian ideas about Borneo as the location for earlier forms of primitive man. Beebe remarks:

Lupar Tidal Bore (Pringle 1970:146, footnote 3).

[28] Beebe was an American naturalist and adventurer who published numerous scholarly and adventure books in the first 60 years of the twentieth century. He is most famous for his 1934 deep ocean descent (3,024 feet) in the 'Bathysphere'. As Director of Tropical Research of the New York Zoological Society, Beebe was commissioned in 1910-1911 by Colonel Anthony Kuser (a wealthy patron of the New York Zoological Society and pheasant enthusiast) to study the pheasants of the world. Beebe published *Pheasant Jungles* in 1927 as the travel book complement to *A Monograph of the Pheasants* (1918), the scholarly work produced from the expedition.

> And now I closed my eyes for a moment, playing my usual games of what I might call intensifying an experience, and said over and over to myself that this was not makebelieve nor abnormal, temporary Dahomey [the former name forthe country of Benin], or Dayak village in some world's fair, but the real thing, the only real Borneo, the actual, wild, savage Sea-Dayaks [Iban]. And also as usual, when I closed my eyes, my other senses became dominant, and the smells reinforced my assertions, - the heavy, not unpleasant, and not Negroid odour of the Dayaks themselves, and sifting through all the aromatic fragrance of the burning resin. An overwhelming realization of alien, primitive man, of the elemental vitality of exotic savagery possessed me. For a while the veil was lifted between the present and the far distant past, and I sensed keenly the life of my savage ancestors, with all its superstitions, its cruelty and fitful emotionality (Beebe 1927:237-238).

Beebe's comments reveal that when he visited Sarawak he was conversant with a well-established stereotype linking the idea of wild Borneo and the Iban. That he presents himself as confronting 'the only real Borneo, the actual, wild, savage Sea-Dayaks' signals the twentieth century tendency for the Iban to become a main focus for the theme of wild Borneo. When he has to convince himself that he is not in a 'make-believe' or 'abnormal' environment he repeats the recurrent theme that, for Western visitors, the wildness of Borneo and its people makes uncertain the distinction between reality and fantasy and between the present and the primitive past. He also provides a remarkably direct revision of the nineteenth century theme of Borneo as a post-Darwinian site of the survival of primeval man. The Iban become the occasion for a popular, romantic vision of a meeting with 'primitive man' and a romantic personal return to primitive savagery. Beebe's vision of a veil lifted between modern man and his 'savage ancestors' is a classic statement of early twentieth century nostalgia for the wild and the primitive. In addition, there is an element of sexual glamour in Beebe's 'vitality of exotic savagery' that links with Hollywood stereotypes of the period as well as with the writings of D.H.Lawrence. Beebe also finds the Iban an occasion for the threat of degeneration, to 'cruelty and fitful emotionality', in a way that recalls Conrad's Patusan but has the appeal of a well-established trope about 'savage ancestors'.

Beebe's claim that he had to remind himself that the real Borneo was not a 'Dayak village in some world's fair but the real thing' is a reminder that there is logical progression from the world fairs of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century (with their fabricated display of the wild and exotic) to later mass culture mixing of popular anthropology, museum culture, commercial entertainment and tourism. The

theatricality of his 'vision' of the primitive foreshadows the experience of recent longhouse tourists who are encouraged to play at believing that the staged events provided during their tour transport them to wild Borneo.

The film Borneo (1937)

The 1937 film *Borneo* by Martin and Osa Johnson was shot in British North Borneo (now Sabah). The Johnsons were popular naturalists and entertainers who specialised in making 'adventure' documentaries for the American public in the 1920s and 1930s. Their films were generally low-budget productions that focussed on wildlife photography and adventure stories similar to early Hollywood Tarzan movies and Boys' Own adventure novels (Imperato and Imperato 1992).[29] The Johnsons' film illustrates the widespread twentieth century direction towards visual texts, with increased emphasis on images of the landscape, animals and people of Borneo. It illustrates the translation of nineteenth century wild Borneo themes into stereotypes of the consumer culture of the twentieth century, where it develops legendary status.

Both the plot and script of *Borneo* are very simplistic and little attempt is made to give an accurate account of the locality or local people. The emphasis is on broad popular entertainment in the mode of the commercial cinema industry. *Borneo* recycles the tradition of wild Borneo in a cheaply-produced wildlife documentary with slapstick sketches designed to appeal to the 1930s American Saturday matinee cinema audience.[30] The film consists of a series of slapstick sketches that sensationalise and trivialise local people and their customs, followed by lengthy footage of wildlife with voice-overs that caricature popular American media personalities and 'types' of the day. The traditional

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[29] Martin Johnson had been well known to the American public as an adventurer/explorer since prior to World War I. As a young man he had been the cabin boy aboard Jack London's yacht the *Snark* on its celebrated journey to the South Seas. For a number of years Johnson made his living presenting a travelling slide show about his 'adventures' (Imperato and Imperato 1992).

[30] A further example of mid-twentieth century mass culture text that uses wild Borneo themes in a comic and sensational way for popular appeal is Frank Clune's 1945 novel *Pacific Parade* (Melbourne, Australia). Clune writes: 'I left Soerabaya [Surabaya]...to fly to North Borneo, determined to find out whether the wild men of Borneo are wilder than the wild men of Woolloomooloo, where I was born...In the distance ahead was the sheen of a serpentine stream winding through a vast plain of dark green jungle. It was the mysterious Barito River, in the homeland of the Dayak head hunters!...We grounded the airport at Banjarmasin, in south Borneo, and the plane was surrounded by

themes of the jungle, animals and strange people of Borneo are translated into stereotypes that can be circulated within the broadest codes of Hollywood entertainment and commodity fiction. For example, one scene involves footage of a family of proboscis monkeys with a voice-over that caricatures Jimmy Durante. Another scene involves a parody of a Jewish psychiatrist. The film includes a river expedition to visit a tribe of feared 'headhunters' (who prove to be friendly) and the climax is a staged episode of the capture of an orang-utan for an American zoo, involving the use of the Johnsons' seaplane to frighten the orang-utan from a tree into a net held by waiting villagers. The orang-utan episode borrows heavily from the last scenes of *King Kong* (1933).

Borneo is interesting for the way in which it restates key themes of the tradition as commercial cliché based on a sensational code. For example, the opening scene shows the Johnsons' seaplane flying low over Sabah as the narrator tells viewers they are witnessing:

> ...wings across Borneo, that island of primitive ferocity which gave its name to that legendary wild man ...we were not looking for towns but headed over the jungle, teaming with fantastic life that makes this the isle of the incredible (Johnson and Johnson 1937).

The narration restates the themes of the jungle, savagery and the wild man of Borneo in terms of formulaic, popular hyperbole. Borneo is described as 'the island of nature in reverse', 'the isle of the impossible', 'the isle of the inconceivable', 'the isle of the unimaginable' and 'the isle of the undreamable'. As the film unfolds, flora and fauna are fused into a cinematographic tableau of the fantastic, including scenes with 'headhunters', walking fish and a King Kong-like orang-utan - all seen as equal attractions and described as 'a tall story come true' (Johnson and Johnson 1937). The film is descended from nineteenth century texts that characterise Borneo as a place where the distinction between fantasy and fact becomes distorted, but the approach is also representative of a more recent process of commodification of the tradition of wild Borneo, which extends all the way to contemporary tourism.

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wild men. Alas for romance, they were all dressed in striped pants and shirts which looked like pyjamas. They seemed more like bed hunters than head hunters' (Clune 1945:83).

While much of the film is devoted to the Johnsons filming 'headhunters', 'bizarre wildlife' and other scenes of the 'incredible', there are many other scenes of domestic activities, such as cleaning the jungle 'bungalow', cooking, fishing and reading. These domestic scenes offer cinematic evidence of the continuing tradition that Borneo is at once wild and safe, dangerous and domestic. In the words of the narrator, Borneo is a 'dark, mysterious byway of the unknown world' containing, 'older and more primitive tribes - headhunters they used to be, and maybe still are'. On the other hand, it is clear that the Johnsons are not in real danger because of their role as creators of a wild Borneo experience that is a kind of cinematic tourism. In this way, the film foreshadows later tourism, where tourists to Borneo expect an experience that replicates the adventure and exoticism of wild Borneo without displacing Western domestic comfort and security – the 'adventureless adventure'.

Ulu The World's End (1961)

Borneo has been a popular subject in post World War II travel writing and, in particular travel journalism. The example here is the travel memoir *Ulu The World's End* (*Ulu*) (1961) by Jorgen Bisch, a Danish filmmaker and travel writer.[31]

'Ulu', the first word of the title, is the Iban (and Malay) word meaning 'upriver' or 'upstream'. It is coupled with the phrase 'The World's End' to combine the tradition of the journey upriver with the view that Borneo is a place of primeval wilderness. For example, Chapter Seventeen, about the Punan people of central Borneo, is entitled 'The Most Primitive People in the World', while in Chapter One Bisch explains the initial reason for his desire to visit and film Sarawak in terms of the romance of the wild and the primitive:

> I longed for that primitive feeling that must have been familiar to the stone age: the feeling of fighting against nature...Once more I would live among primitive but sound communities; see once again untamed nature and unspoilt people (Bisch 1961:16-17).

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[31] *Ulu* was first published in Danish as *Ulu: Verdens Ende* (1960).

The quoted passage is evidence of a twentieth century tendency for the romance of the wild to be associated with the focus on new versions of the noble savage brought about by a complex web of historical changes (these include the rise of the media, the decline of the older colonialisms, changes in belief and changes in censorship). Borneo and the Iban have become focal points in a twentieth century, photographic iconography of the figure of the savage person as at once real, contemporary and romantically different, while, at the same time, the focus for nostalgia and fantasy. *Ulu* is an extreme example of the tendency for the less censored texts of the twentieth century to make explicit connections between Western sexual desire and the noble savage.

Ulu turns the theme of the noble savage into a focus on Iban women. It makes the figure of the indigenous woman an occasion for sexualised commercial imagery. Bisch's sexualised chronicle of his trip to an Iban longhouse stands out as writing designed to appeal to Western fantasies about the sexual availability of Oriental and indigenous women. This is reminiscent of Said's observations on Orientalism and Western male sexuality in which he argues that European accounts of the Orient have typically involved an objectifying male gaze that sexualises the Orient as a location of desire and open sexuality:

> This is especially evident in the writing of travellers and novelists: women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express themselves in unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all, they are willing (Said 1978:207).

The front cover jacket (Figure 10) of *Ulu* is a definitive example of an image of Borneo's indigenous women as available to a sexual gaze. The cover presents a large, colour portrait of a bare-breasted Iban woman in a submissive pose, with the title and the author's name emblazoned across the image. The cover is not a documentary photograph of a young longhouse woman going about her daily routine, but a carefully-designed image appealing to the romantic ideal of the noble savage and to Orientalist beliefs about primitive sexuality.

Figure 10: Front cover jacket *Ulu The World's End* by Jorgen Bisch.

Ulu is a picture book as much as it is a piece of travel writing. Bisch states in the introductory chapter that his 'adventure' was partly sponsored by the American television network N.B.C in return for the author supplying a film and photo documentary on 'Borneo's Pygmies' (identified as the Punan). *Ulu* contains a number of colour photographs illustrating the narrative, including staged portraits of Iban and other non-Muslim indigenous women naked from the waist up. For example, in one chapter there is a full-page, close-up, colour image of a bare-breasted Iban woman combing her hair and smiling engagingly, with a caption that reads:

> This young Iban woman is well aware that she is good-looking. In a sense it is part of her work, for she is one of the three girls in the longhouse who, like geishas, serve arrack [rice wine, *tuak*] and dance for the entertainment of guests (Bisch 1961:64).[32]

The theme of the beautiful longhouse maiden waiting to serve the Western visitor runs through much of the twentieth century travel literature about Borneo.[33] Moreover, in

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[32] The unnamed woman is also the subject of a series of postcards. Available in some of the less reputable souvenir shops in Kuching (although now less common), the postcards show her similarly dressed and posing by a riverbank in

my experience it was not uncommon for longhouse tourists to ask guides about 'customs' of which they had heard involving sexual promiscuity among the young women in longhouses (although guides went out of their way to correct any such misunderstandings prior to tourists arriving at the longhouse).

As with other formulations in the tradition of wild Borneo the view of longhouse women as promiscuous has a partial heritage in a misreading and distortion of Iban custom, and in this case it is Iban customary courting known as *nyayap*. *Nyayap* is a process whereby late at night a male suitor sneaks into the *bilik* of a female member of the longhouse to talk with her and make his intentions known in private.[34] *Nyayap* is not ostensibly about sex, although intimacy of some form between the couple is accepted as part of the custom. Furthermore, it is not a secretive process that allows for surreptitious trysts to take place between 'lovers'. Instead, it is an accepted form of courtship that occurs in the girl's *bilik* with the full knowledge of her parents (although parents and other members of the *bilik* feign ignorance of the suitor's presence and let the couple court in private). *Nyayap* is a custom allowed only between Iban and it is still commonly practised. Non-Iban persons are strongly discouraged from attempting it.[35]

In *Ulu*, Bisch claims that it was not uncommon for male visitors to have a 'different girl every night'. In addition to fabricating a traveller's tale about wild sexuality, Bisch adds a spurious anthropological explanation:

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a series of semi-erotic poses. The presence of these postcards suggests that Bisch sold several of his negatives to local postcard manufacturers (probably in Singapore) before returning to Denmark.

[33] For example, see *Panjamon: I was a Headhunter* by Jean-Yves Domalain (1973) (originally published in France in 1971 under the title *Panjamon: Un Experience de la Vie Sauvage*). As an example demonstrating the theme of overt sexualization and the willingness of local women *Panjamon* is perhaps even more extreme than *Ulu*. For example, Domalain comments: 'I didn't know how old they were - maybe fifteen or sixteen. I had the impression of being among a fairly permissive society, and if the opportunity occurred I wouldn't be averse to improving relations with one or the other girl, or even both of them - why not? I wasn't after exclusive rights, far from it, sex among the Ibans of Kalimantan is an easy, uninhibited matter (Domalain 1973:104).

[34] A detailed discussion of *nyayap* is unnecessary given the subject of the thesis. However, it should be noted that the custom includes detailed expectations and rules: for example, the girl who is the subject of late night visits makes the job of her suitor more difficult by tying up the door to her *bilik*, and if the boy returns more than three times he is signalling his intention to marry.

[35] Several Stamang residents politely pointed this out to me because they thought it prudent considering I was staying in the longhouse for an extended time and was unaccompanied. The Adat Iban Order 1993 makes this point explicitly in sections 132-136.

> White travellers have often accused the young Iban women of sexual immorality. But as there are no moral rules forbidding them to cohabit with men to their heart's ddight, it is futile to apply Western standards. It is said that when a male guest arrives at a long-house, it is considered perfectly natural – and indeed is expected – that the women should be ready to receive him at night (Bisch 1961:68).

While these observations are incorrect and offensive to most Iban they are representative of the kind of Orientalist views about sexuality that complicate the tradition of wild Borneo. A less explicit version of Bisch's sexualised view of Iban women continues in the marketing of the contemporary Sarawak tourist industry which, while not referring explicitly to sex, continues to promote the idea of longhouse 'maidens' who tend to the needs of the longhouse visitor (see Chapter Five).

Wild People (1990)

Wild People by Andro Linklater (1990) is an account of a visit to Sarawak by a team undertaking research for a proposed Time-Life Books series titled 'Wild People of the Earth'. Linklater was employed as the team's writer and he gives an account of the project's disintegration because the team failed to find any longhouse communities considered suitably 'wild' enough for Time-Life Books (Linklater's title, *Wild People,* is a play on the tradition of the wild Iban). *Wild People* demonstrates the tendency of later twentieth century texts to invite market appeal by recirculating wild Borneo themes while, at the same time, providing a complex narrative that includes knowing critique and debunking of those themes. In this way it mirrors some Sarawak and longhouse tour marketing (as well as aspects of the tour themselves), which depict key markers for wild Borneo while acknowledging their popular appeal and their distance from contemporary Iban longhouse life. Linklater's approach is a humorous, intelligent and passionate attempt to understand the Iban and the concept of the wild, and is delivered in the form of mass-culture travel literature.

Linklater defines the set of images and themes considered by Time-Life as illustrative of 'wild' Borneo, and shows their inaccuracy and the difficulties faced by the research team. In Chapter One, 'Choosing the Wild People' he describes how the project evolved out of the success of a previous Time-Life series titled *The World's Wild*

Places. He explains that market research revealed that a series about 'People of the Wild' or 'Wild People of the Earth' was likely to be successful. Time-Life prepared a list of 'wild people' including Greenland Eskimos, Amazonian Indians, Himalayan tribesmen and the Iban. In addition to Linklater as the team's writer, the team assembled to cover the Iban 'story' included a photographer, Anthony Howarth, and two consultant anthropologists, Dr Michael Heppell and Dr James Masing.[36] The management of Time-Life Books made clear that Linklater's work as writer was 'to fill the space between the pictures' and that appropriate photographs, rather than a factual literary account of the Iban, were of paramount importance for the marketability of the series. Linklater explains how Time-Life management outlined the visual requirements and themes of the project, including the crucial requirements that the subjects should wear traditional clothing and show few, if any, signs of modernity. The basic definition of 'wild people' was 'about people resisting the encroachment of the modern world' (Linklater 1990:13).

In a way that is paralleled in recent tourism, much of this late twentieth century understanding of the wild is in terms of absence of the material conditions of Western, twentieth century modernity. The other emphasis is on the material conditions of 'traditional' life, and, in particular, traditional costume, crafts, architecture and the faces and bodies of the Iban. Furthermore, Time-Life required a very specific style of portrait photography: 'we find that people like beautiful faces better. So keep freaks out of shot, and shoot your portraits a little below the chin to give the face a forceful look, a little determined perhaps, noble if you can' (Linklater 1990:14). The assumptions combine photography, a largely Western commercial sense of beauty and a continuation of the tradition of the noble savage.

As the narrative develops, the research team visit a number of Iban longhouses and find that none conforms to the Borneo image that Time-Life Books requires. Using the photographer's failed attempts to capture proper images, Linklater educates the reader about the limited and inaccurate nature of the definition of wild Borneo that is the basis

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[36] Time-Life Books employed Dr Heppell. Dr Masing was the Sarawak Government's representative on the project.

for the project. *Wild People* becomes a combination of travel memoir and popular anthropology. Linklater challenges the main terms of the tradition of wild Borneo and his analysis foreshadows many of the significant issues involved in the recent longhouse tourist industry. For example, he demonstrates the gap between Time-Life's stereotypical, conservative and commercial understanding of 'wild people' and the contemporary reality of Iban longhouse life, something that longhouse tour companies in Kuching also face (see Chapter Seven). In particular, Linklater challenges the assumption that the Iban are tribal people isolated from the wider world and somehow cut off from modernity and its commodities. He stresses the extent to which the Iban have assimilated Western material culture. Outboard motors are important possessions, longhouses have new corrugated iron roofs and the residents wear T-shirts and Western-style clothing.

The development of the narrative makes the terms of the Time-Life definition of 'wild people' even clearer and extends the range of Linklater's questioning of the established themes of the tradition of wild Borneo. Linklater notes that sexualised nakedness is a main requirement according to the Time-Life definition of the wild. He makes the shrewd joke that bare breasts are an essential requirement for this kind of commercial variation on anthropology (this presents difficulties in relation to Iban women, who generally cover their breasts except when bathing) (Linklater 1990:47). He also takes up the traditional view of the Iban as headhunters and argues that while taking head trophies might still have been practiced during World War II, and while there might be isolated cases of decapitation in the present, the customary codes that led to the stereotype of 'The Headhunters of Borneo' changed a long time ago (Linklater 1990:195). Linklater stresses the distance between the contemporary discourse of wild Borneo and any historical realities that may have inspired its major themes. In a way that parallels general issues involved in contemporary longhouse tourism, the research team debate the definition of 'wild people', what degree of reality might be acceptable in the representation of longhouse life and whether that representation needs to be faked

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Dr Masing later became Assistant Minister for Tourism and, later, Minister for Tourism in Sarawak.

in order to be successful for entrepreneurs and consumers with a conservative understanding of wild people:

> It was clear that we had come to a crisis...[we] had an anxious conference about what constituted wild people, and rather more importantly what Time-Life expected them to look like. I argued that the clothes were irrelevant; if the Iban still genuinely followed their traditional beliefs we should fake the pictures, by persuading some of them to wear traditional costume, on the grounds that this was the best way of showing their inner selves. James, as wild person himself, took a strictly ontological approach.
>
> 'Why do we want to fake it?' he asked. 'Why can't we just photograph the Iban as they are, and say this is what they are like?
>
> This, of course was an unacceptable suggestion, as Tony explained. Although he was not going to fake anything, there was a limit to the amount of modernity TimeLife would accept. Most Iban might prefer Western clothes, but there had to be some who still held to the old ways, and they were the ones Time-Life wanted to emphasise (Linklater 1990:46).[37]

Linklater believes that Time-Life was willing to accept a degree of reality, but found that the level of reality in the photographs was too great. Linklater tells us that Time-Life Books cancelled the project after additional market research indicated that a 'wild people' series might not be commercially successful.

Linklater's analysis of the Time-Life project provides extensive accounts of the Iban and daily life in the longhouse. The Iban are characterised in terms of close observation of such matters as their robust attitude to life, their drinking rituals, ribaldry and daily routine of hard work. Linklater adds extensive accounts of Iban customary law and its relationship to Iban animism and religious beliefs. At this point the writing is interesting as a hybrid contribution to the tradition of wild Borneo, by constructing a personal view of the Iban as wild people. Linklater claims that if the survival of the primitive depends on such matters as traditional costume then the Iban have lost their primitive identity. 'If the only authentic Iban wore loin-cloths or short skirts and nothing from the waist up, that society was already wiped out' (Linklater 1990:143). In contrast, he argues that the Iban survive as a 'primitive' people for the reason that they continue to understand their changed material conditions in terms of traditional customary law and the unitary, magical understanding of traditional Iban animism and

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[37] Ironically, the reference to 'James' is a reference to Dr James Masing. The issues raised are remarkably similar to challenges faced by the Sarawak Tourism Board in promoting Sarawak and longhouse tours for which, during his tenure as Minister, Dr Masing was responsible.

religious belief. He suggests that he understands the Iban for the reason that he now knows 'what it must be like to live in a unitary world' (Linklater 1990:147).

Linklater's account is at once beyond and within the established tradition of wild Borneo. Much of the account of Sarawak and Iban life is about the attractions of the jungle, rivers and hunting, with a framework of appeal to the idea of 'going native' in a way which is a return to nature and that repeats the traditional itinerary of a journey in the interior of Borneo. When Linklater joins in the hunt 'barefoot through the forest as the Iban did' he feels that he has 'broken into the Iban world' and that he cannot 'think of any advantages in the Western way of life or any disadvantages in the Sarawak forest' (Linklater 1990:175). His last statement is that his time with the Iban has been a strange adventure in time and reality in which he has been allowed briefly 'into paradise' (Linklater 1990:208). Moreover, although Linklater's narrative involves a sophisticated use of the conventions of wild Borneo it remains journalistic. For example, similar to Bisch, Linklater presents a sensationalised view of the sexuality of Iban men and women, including the suggestion that customary courtship codes include a predisposition towards domestic promiscuity (Linklater 1990:181-92). In addition, his volume provides a series of photographs that illustrate the Iban assimilation of Western clothes and technology, their maintenance of traditional customs and rituals and bare-breasted Iban women bathing.

Ibans Troféer, Huvudjägarna I Borneos Regnskogar (Iban Trophies, The Headhunters of Borneo's Rainforests) (1995)

Iban Trophies, The Headhunters of Borneo's Rainforests is a catalogue for an exhibition of Iban antiquities hosted in 1995 by the Malmo Museum in Sweden in association with the Sarawak Museum. The artefacts for the exhibition were loaned from the Sarawak Museum's collection of Iban antiquities and the catalogue was published in Swedish as a limited edition. The catalogue is further evidence of the recent focus on the Iban and Iban longhouses and of the recent developments in which the tradition of travel and adventure in Borneo has become part of global tourism and global 'exotic' culture for

general consumption. It is also evidence that the current context is a combination of both well-informed understanding of changing conditions and of traditional themes about wild Borneo. In addition to its general significance as Borneo text, the catalogue is specifically relevant to the case study longhouse, Stamang.

As part of the exhibition, the Malmo Museum sought a series of photographs of Iban longhouse life as illustrations for the catalogue. With the assistance of the tour company AOS, the Sarawak Museum arranged for the Stamang community to be the subjects for the photographs. Representatives from the Malmo Museum visited Stamang (on a specially-arranged longhouse tour) and, in addition to the photo shoot, it was decided that two community members would be flown to Sweden to perform Iban traditional dances at the launch of the exhibition. Pengulu Rentap and Lumpong (both talented male dancers and residents of Stamang) were chosen by the Stamang community and flown to Sweden with representatives from the Sarawak Museum and AOS. The launch of the exhibition went as planned and the exhibition was extremely successful.[38] Following the exhibition, the Malmo Museum, in association with AOS, offered the 'Friends of the Malmo Museum' a series of special-interest longhouse tours to Stamang. Three tours, each involving around 20 people, took place during 1996. The Malmo Museum tours followed the same program as others to Stamang, although a grander welcoming ceremony was offered (see Chapter Six).

The relationship developed by the Malmo Museum with the Stamang community was based on the suitability of the longhouse and its community as an example of an authentic and 'traditional' longhouse. The Stamang community received the tour groups as a part of their ongoing involvement with organised tourism and their commitment to strengthening the community's tourism business.[39] In 1997, when AOS ceased offering tours to Stamang because the residents elected to rebuild their longhouse in a way that AOS perceived as unsuitable for tourism, the Malmo Museum

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[38] The King of Sweden visited the exhibition and Pengulu and Lumpong were asked to stage a special dance demonstration for him.

[39] The museum tour groups received special attention from the community and especially Pengulu and Lumpong, who went out of their way to provide extra dance performances, special food etc.

also ceased its tours. As the new longhouse was built to a modern design it was no longer suitable for tours concerned with 'traditional' culture.

Iban Trophies, like *Wild People*, critiques the nostalgia for the past that is part of the tradition of wild Borneo. On the other hand, it includes a set of staged photographs of traditional 'wild people' to illustrate the contemporary life of Iban longhouse residents. Significantly, while the catalogue discusses a range of issues affecting contemporary Iban longhouse society, including the impact of development and logging, it provides no captions or information for the staged illustrations interleaved with the written text, with the effect that the reader is encouraged to assume that the illustrations are representative of contemporary longhouse life. For example, interwoven into a 22-page discussion of matters such as social organisation, problems arising from development, and the societal context of headhunting, there are several full page (A4) colour illustrations, two of which are reproduced below (Figure 11).

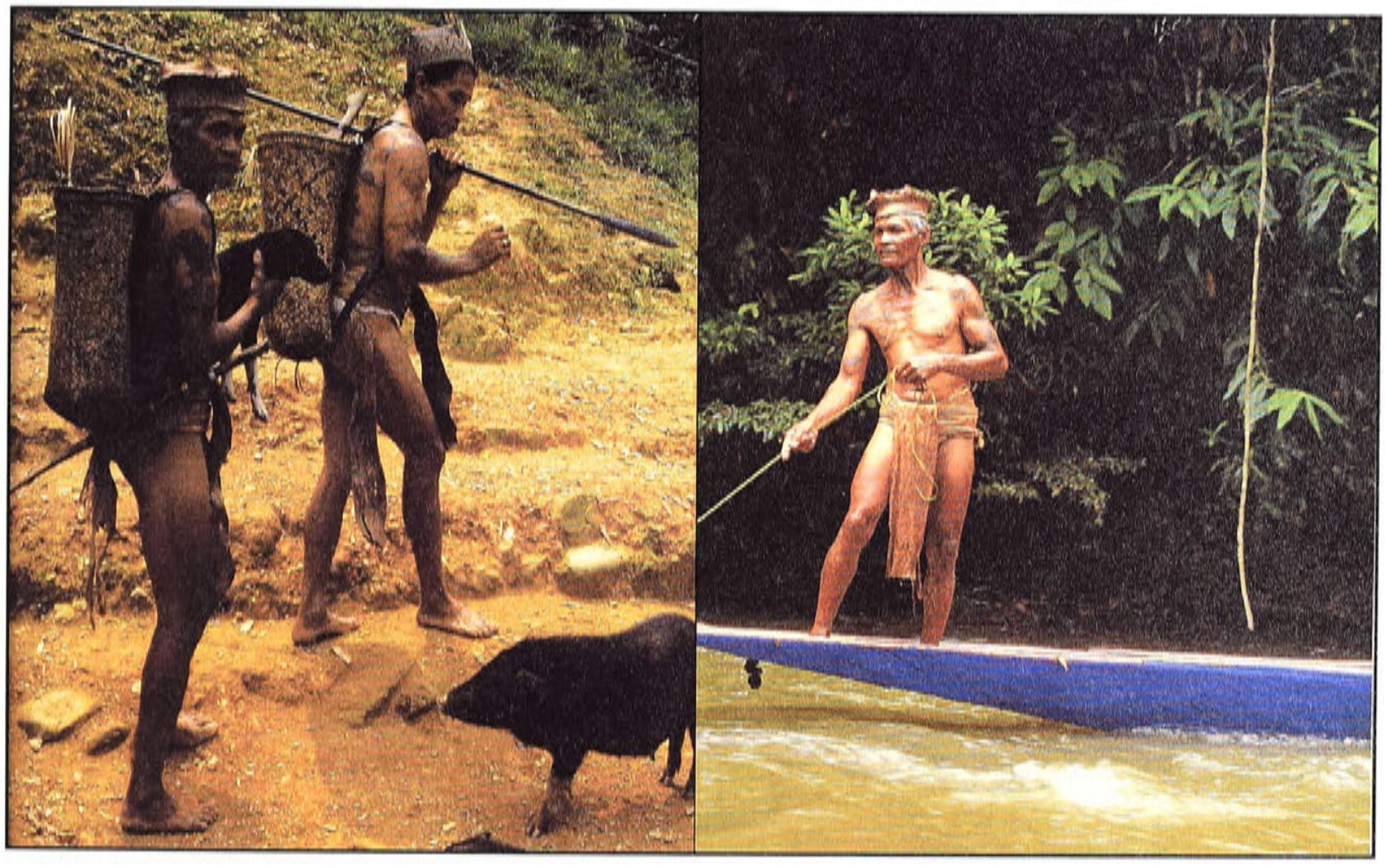

Figure 11: Illustrations from *Ibans Troféer, Huvudjägarna I Borneos Regnskogar* featuring Stamang residents posing in traditional costume.

The image on the left depicts a staged and improbable event, fabricated for an audience familiar with the tradition of wild Borneo. It presents an image of Iban culture frozen

in, or taken out of, time. There is no reference to modernity and the subjects wear and carry items manufactured from jungle materials, including bark loincloths, hand-made rattan baskets, wooden blowpipes and rattan hats. The illustration is skilfully framed photographic art, highlighting the aesthetic qualities of the subjects' bodies (including their tattoos) and the traditional cultural props they wear and carry with them. It presents the Iban as unchanged, romantic and glamorous, wild people, a view based on a presumed past state when they did not have access to modern commodities and, to borrow Bisch's phrase, when they lived 'unspoilt lives'. It is a staged event appealing to an aesthetic ideal of authentic, 'original' jungle people and it is exemplary of the wild Borneo convention of fabrications about Bornean life - a modern version of stories involving men with tails. The image on the right repeats the same theme with the actor dressed improbably in a bark-cloth loincloth (although fishing from a longboat in the style shown is not uncommon).

The catalogue contains several other similar illustrations. They include: a photograph of a Stamang resident in a loincloth and rattan hat chopping freshly cooked pig on a large leaf (Figure 12, right); close-up images of head trophies hanging in the *ruai* of Stamang; and a full-page image (Figure 12, left) of an Iban girl dressed in ceremonial costume working on a back-strap loom and weaving a traditional Iban textile (*pua kumbu*).

The images in Figure 12, like the other illustrations in the catalogue, are fabricated, atypical events presented as illustrative of contemporary longhouse life. For example, in my experience, Iban women do not generally work a back-strap loom in ceremonial costume. The illustrations are complicit with the fabrications of the wild Borneo tradition and reproduce the pseudo-anthropology of Time-Life Books within contemporary, international museum culture.

Figure 12: Illustrations from *Ibans Troféer, Huvudjägarna I Borneos Regnskogar* featuring Stamang residents posing in traditional costume.

The images in the catalogue are even more remarkable when considered in the context of the written text that engages critically with Western traditions of representing and understanding Borneo. Furthermore, Dr Peter Kedit, who is Iban, and who was the Director of the Sarawak Museum at the time, is listed as a joint author of the catalogue. That is, the catalogue seems to be more than simply a Western variation on traditional themes about wild people. It appears to demonstrate the involvement of a member of the educated Iban elite in the transmission of the tradition of wild Borneo, and perhaps his acceptance of its marketability. It also demonstrates the willingness of the Stamang community to stage a marketable performance of wild Borneo. The cover jacket précis provides a summary of claims for the authenticity of the view of the Iban in the exhibition and the catalogue:

> 'Headhunter' – what do you think of when you hear the word? Bloodthirsty primitive tribes without faith in God sneaking up on each other, South East Asia's humid snake infested rainforests? The myth about reality is that no matter what that reality is it can be romanticised and made beautiful or ugly. This book is about the Iban tribe of Borneo, the tribe which boldly

> and aggressively collected head trophies. … This book is about Iban trophies and decreasing the distance between myth and reality (Blanking et al 1995:inside front cover jacket).

The full text is written in a similar way and with a similar emphasis on the theme of the headhunters of Borneo:

> The Ibans of Sarawak are one of Borneo's famous headhunting tribes. In European books, much has been written about the repulsive headhunting amongst "Borneo's Wilds". European authors mix in fantasies about "the noble savage" and tropical romance when writing about Borneo and headhunting. However, not much has been written about the everydaylife of the "warriors" and their culture. … Everything has been overshadowed by the interest in headhunting, which is only part of the Iban's multifaceted culture (Blanking et al 1995:84).

The catalogue's acknowledgement that 'European' accounts of Borneo have dwelt on 'the noble savage', 'tropical romance', and 'headhunting' mirrors themes I have shown to be representative of the tradition of wild Borneo. On the other hand, while the written text of the catalogue suggests that in order to increase Western knowledge of the Iban it is necessary to decrease 'the distance between myth and reality', the illustrations do quite the opposite and reassert a conventional and conservative version of wild Borneo.

Overall, the catalogue shows the adaptability and continuing strength of wild Borneo themes into the present. Perhaps most significantly, the catalogue demonstrates a continuing commitment to maintaining and fabricating conservative themes of the tradition of wild Borneo for their marketability, and their assimilation into local Bornean commercial initiatives. This is a pivotal issue for the promotional material produced to market Sarawak and longhouse tours which is discussed in the following chapter, as well as in the design and format of the tours themselves.

Chapter 5: Promoting Longhouse Tours

> All this ludic pastiche and reversal of truth has been performed by language. The language of recreation has playfully re-created reality. Gaze has been shaped by phrase (Dann 1996:23).

> In an important sense, then, tourist marketing reveals more about what tour operators think of a Western need to experience authentic and primitive natives than about the natives themselves (Silver 1993:302).

The following chapter examines the way that Sarawak and longhouse tours are promoted. I discuss how the promotional material advances a consistent and superficially compelling view of longhouse community life in Sarawak that suggests that the communities are remote, 'traditional' and largely unaffected by modernity. However, with that understanding of the promotional material as a basis, I argue that what it communicates about Sarawak longhouse communities and the longhouse tour product is ambiguous and that that ambiguity is reflected in the way that the longhouse tour industry designs and accounts for the content and form of the tours.

The chapter begins with a brief history of the development of the tour industry in Sarawak and the promotion of longhouse tours. This provides background to the current operation of the industry within which the contemporary marketing images are produced. Following this, I outline a methodological approach to examining the marketing material for Sarawak and longhouse tours, as part of a broader travel marketing genre. This approach identifies the images and text that comprise the marketing material as a discursive 'language of tourism', informed by various conventions of understanding about indigenous peoples, wild Borneo and the Orient. The importance of photographic imagery in travel marketing is also examined. I then apply this methodology to select examples of the genre and analyse their content. While the focus is predominantly on travel and tour brochures, as they are the principal media through which longhouse tours are marketed, a web site is also considered. Finally, I analyse material from two senior Sarawak Government figures associated with the Sarawak Tourism Board (STB), talking about the design and promotion of longhouse tours and their relationship to contemporary longhouse life.

Key developments in the growth and promotion of the longhouse tour industry.

From about 1963 to the mid 1980s longhouse tourism remained mostly small-scale, marketing was localised and the tour companies running tours produced the majority of promotional material in Kuching (although it was often printed in Singapore).

This situation changed around the mid-1980s when federal and state tourism marketing agencies began to widely promote Sarawak and Malaysia to the Western out-bound tourist market and began to use longhouses and longhouse people as a prominent feature of the marketing (Zeppel 1994: 105-107; Hitchcock et al 1993:4, King 1993a:102-13). At around the same time, longhouse tour companies began to more seriously develop commercial arrangements with Western out-bound travel companies offering Asia-wide package tours. Consequently, from about the mid-1980s the longhouse tour industry began to grow. For example, in 1984 longhouse tours expanded from the Skrang River to the Lemanak River and in the early-1990s there was a further expansion, with tours offered to longhouses situated on the rivers and tributaries flowing into the Batang Ai Dam (Zeppel 1994: 105-107).[1]

Since the mid-1990s the longhouse tour industry has maintained a steady commercial presence in longhouse communities, tour companies and the international travel market.[2] Moreover, the established longhouse tour companies have remained in much the same market position and the number of companies offering tours on a full-time basis has remained at around 12,[3] although Western visitor numbers to Sarawak have increased steadily, doubling over the period 1990 to 2000 (see Appendix D).[4]

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[1] 1984 was the year that the Borneo Heartland tour company first began tours to Demong longhouse on the Lemanak River.

[2] According to longhouse tour company managers and tour guides, in 1997 there was a brief downturn in the industry because of forest fires in Kalimantan which created smog haze across Sarawak, Sabah, Singapore and peninsular Malaysia and which received global news coverage, although statistically visitors to Sarawak from Western countries did not appreciably drop that year (see Appendix D). This may indicate that the forest fires had a more severe impact on the longhouse tour industry than, for example, on resort-based tourism in the Kuching area.

[3] Sarawak Travel Association (STA) Membership Directory 1994, 1995 and 1996. It should be noted, however, that this figure does not represent the number of companies that actually sell longhouse tours, because the business network in the Sarawak travel industry is such that almost any local travel agency can sell a longhouse tour. For example, a travel agency that may specialise in selling overseas holidays to Kuching locals will sell a longhouse tour

From the early 1980s, beginning with the Fourth Malaysia Plan (1980-1985), and throughout the 1990s, the Malaysian Federal Government invested millions of Malaysian ringgit in promoting Malaysia, including Sarawak, as a new and appealing travel destination, particularly for the long haul, Western travel market (Berma 2000:284; Hitchcock et al 1993:4). For example, the 'Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996-2000' allocated $696.6 million ringgit for 'expansion of physical and social infrastructure' to support the 'growth of the tourism industry' (*New Straits Times* 7 May 1996). In addition, the Federal Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism substantially increased funding to the Malaysian Tourist Development Corporation (TDC) and the Malaysian Tourist Promotion Board (TPB), the national agencies responsible for marketing Malaysia as a whole. In 1990 and 1994 the TPB was in charge of the successful 'Visit Malaysia Year' promotions, as well as other overseas marketing strategies based on themes such as 'Fascinating Malaysia' and 'Malaysia Naturally' (Clark et al 1993:115-118) (King 1993a:105). These promotional campaigns all included the marketing of Sarawak culture and nature as a unique part of Malaysia. In all the promotional material produced for these campaigns that I have examined, Sarawak, the Iban and other non-Muslim indigenous groups were depicted with reference to familiar wild Borneo themes, such as jungle remoteness, exotic otherness and headhunting.[5] Zeppel also notes the presence of these themes in TPB promotional material over the period 1983 to 1991 (Zeppel 1994:107).

In the same period the Sarawak State Government began independently promoting Sarawak as a tourist destination to domestic and overseas markets and various government programs were directed at the development of tourist infrastructure and facilities. The state-funded Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) was

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to a tourist who, by chance, inquires at their shop front, although this is rare. The agency will receive a commission and the job will be handed over to a company that specialises in longhouse tours.

[4] Zeppel estimates a figure of 16,500 tourists to longhouses on the Skrang, Lemanak and Batang Ai Rivers in 1991 (Zeppel 1993:59). I am not aware of any other estimates or statistics on the overall number of tourists taking longhouse tours over this period, although given that the number of longhouse tour companies has remained largely static, but Western tourist numbers have increased considerably, I would suggest that tourist numbers to longhouses have increased steadily but not dramatically.

[5] As the campaigns promoted Malaysia and not just Sarawak, a large proportion of the material also focused on peninsular Malaysia and Malay culture.

involved in several major infrastructure projects that were considered necessary for improving the state's potential for large-scale tourism.[6] Some examples include: the Kuching Hilton; the Sarawak Cultural Village; the Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort; the Damai Beach Resort; sealing the road through to the Damai beach; and an upgrade of Kuching airport (Clark et al 1993). Furthermore, during this period a large amount of glossy marketing material about Sarawak was produced in the form of pamphlets and posters, many of which, similar to those produced by the TPB, depicted the Iban (and other non-Muslim indigenous groups from Sarawak) as 'traditional' people whose way of living remained unaffected by modernity (Zeppel 1994:111-112).

Partly as a result of this government interest in promoting tourism, by the mid-1990s Sarawak had begun to establish itself within the long haul mass Western tourist market (although Western tourist numbers to Sarawak were still comparatively low when compared with peninsular Malaysia) and the agencies responsible for promoting Sarawak were including longhouse tours amongst the state's key attractions (Clark et al 1993:163). By the mid-1990s, longhouse tours were no longer a small-scale affair driven by the local companies responsible for running the tours, but had become linked with multi-million Malaysian ringgit tourism investments. The Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort (opened in 1994) (Figure 13) illustrates this point well, as it was built partly on the strength that it would become a luxury base from which tourists could undertake longhouse tours.[7] It has since fulfilled that expectation, although perhaps not with the level of commercial success that was expected. In the discussion below I will look more closely at the two key promotional agencies that oversaw these developments in the longhouse tour industry.

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[6] The 1993 Masterplan notes that these projects followed recommendations made in the First Sarawak Tourism Masterplan, which was completed in 1981 (Clark et al 1993:211-222).

[7] The Hilton brochure shown in Figure 13 states, 'For the experience of a lifetime guests can visit an Iban longhouse an hour or so away or venture further upriver to see the virgin primeval rainforest'.

Figure 13: Left, front cover of Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort brochure with longhouse shaped accommodation units visible in the back left. Right, inside page of same brochure showing local leisure activities available, including a visit to a 'traditional native longhouse'.

The Sarawak Tourist Association

The industry-backed Sarawak Tourist Association (STA) is the oldest tourist industry body in Sarawak. Mr Jimmy Choo Poh Hin, Manager of the Choo Poh Hin Travel Agency (CPH), founded the STA in 1963 (STA 1992).[8] The STA is funded by member fees, donations and subsidies from the Sarawak State Government.[9] Membership of the STA is open to individuals and businesses associated with the Sarawak travel industry and the membership includes longhouse tour companies, travel agencies, hotels, individual tour guides and representatives from organisations that run attractions such as the Sarawak Museum and the Sarawak Cultural Village. The STA currently has around 200 members and of these the majority are representatives of Sarawak Chinese-owned companies. Iban representation is limited to a handful of tour guides and representatives of tourist attractions, such as the Sarawak Museum.

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[8] As mentioned previously CPH was also the first company to offer organised longhouse tours in Sarawak.

I make a short digression here to note that it is my understanding that, since 1963 (the year that longhouse tours first began), there has only been one example of an Iban-owned company providing longhouse tours and it folded within a short time.[10] In my experience, Iban make up the smallest number of registered (and unregistered) tour guides[11] and, with the notable exception of the former State Minister for Tourism, Dr James Masing, very few Iban have been, or are, involved with the Sarawak and longhouse tourism industry in any position of authority or influence.[12] Indeed, from the earliest stages of the research it became clear that Iban occupy many of the unskilled positions in the Sarawak tourism industry, such as being performers at the Sarawak Cultural Village or general staff in major hotels. Overall, the position of Iban within the longhouse tour industry is a microcosm of the general pattern of Iban social and economic marginalisation seen across Sarawak (King and Jawan 1996; Jawan 1994).

The STA's objectives as an organisation were outlined in the 1992 promotional film *Hornbill Pioneers*, which it produced in association with the Sarawak Ministry of Environment and Tourism. In the film, Mr Ah Theng Hong, Deputy Chairman of the STA, described STA's objectives as 'to protect and promote the interests of members and to assist with disseminating information on tour packages and places of interest in Sarawak' (STA 1992).

Until the formation of the STB in 1995, the STA was the principal agency promoting Sarawak tourism to domestic and overseas markets. It was responsible for producing a large amount of promotional material for Sarawak tourism, including the promotion of longhouses and longhouse tours as a Sarawak attraction. For example, in the early

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[9] For example, in 1992 it received $650,00 MYR from the Sarawak State Government to fund its operations (Clark et al 1993:115).

[10] The company in question was an initiative between two prominent Iban, one a resident of Randin Longhouse on the Skrang River and the other a public servant based in Kuching. A guesthouse was built and a few tours were successfully conducted, but the business failed because it primarily relied for its clientele on handling excess tourists booked with other companies and, therefore, did not have its own client base. In addition, the owners found gaining independent access to the market difficult because trade remained tied-up with the established operators who, as noted in Chapter Three, maintain contracts with overseas out-bound tour operators for the majority of their business (pers.comm. Jeffry Keroh).

[11] The statements in this paragraph are based on my own observations and not on statistics. I am not aware of any statistics available on these issues and gathering detailed statistical information was not possible, given the restraints of fieldwork.

[12] Dr Peter Kedit, the former Director of the Sarawak Museum, and an Iban person, could also be considered as a person of some influence, as the museum is a major tourist attraction.

1990s it produced a large promotional poster (still commonly available in Kuching), which had as its sole feature a colour image of a large older-style wooden longhouse situated picturesquely beside a river, with the caption 'Sarawak: A Longhouse Experience'. In 1990 the STA launched a discount Sarawak package tour from Singapore called 'Hornbill Escapades', which included a longhouse tour and, in 1991, it developed a similar package from Kuala Lumpur called 'Borneo Escapades'. The package from Singapore proved an initial success with 6,391 tourists taking it in 1990. However, the Kuala Lumpur tours were not as successful and attracted only 832 tourists in 1992 (Clark et al 1993:116).[13] After 1992 the numbers of tourists taking these tours continued to dwindle and they had been abandoned by the time the STB was established in 1995 (Clark et al 1993:114-115).

Also in 1990, the STA established a Sarawak Travel Centre in Singapore and, in 1991, this was followed by another centre in Kuala Lumpur.[14] Today the STA runs a tourist information centre at Kuching airport and another in downtown Kuching near the old courthouse (see Map 3, Chapter Two). The STA also intermittently holds training courses for tour guides working with foreigners, which includes the guides who accompany longhouse tours. The Sarawak State Government funds the courses, which guides must sit if they wish to gain official accreditation as a tour guide from the Sarawak Ministry of Tourism.[15] The STA also runs a fleet of coaches that are available for hire at a subsidised rate to travel agencies, government departments and hotels.

The promotional work of the STA in the early 1990s, combined with that of the TPB, begun in the 1980s, marks the beginning of marketing strategies designed to incorporate longhouse tours as a key feature of mass tourism in Sarawak. The STA's founder, Mr Jimmy Choo Poh Hin, was, essentially, the founder of organised longhouse tourism in Sarawak and as an organisation the STA continues to promote and oversee the current

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[13] I do not know what proportion of tourists on these tours were from Singapore or peninsular Malaysia, but I suspect that most of them were from Western countries.

[14] I am uncertain if the Sarawak Travel Centres are still operating.

[15] The accreditation system means that guides can gain employment with tour companies that adhere to international and Malaysian tourism industry standards and codes and follow proper industrial practices. These companies also require accredited guides for insurance purposes. As the STA is the main tourism industry organisation in Sarawak, non-accredited guides have difficulty finding legitimate work and may have to work for businesses that do not adhere to industry standards, have poor working conditions and may be operating illegally.

form of organised longhouse tourism. In addition, the STA continues to have an influential role as the body representing the business interests of the Sarawak travel industry, including the majority of longhouse tour companies, which are Sarawak Chinese-owned and managed.

The Sarawak Tourism Board

One of the main recommendations of the 1993 Sarawak Tourism Masterplan was the creation of a centralised state agency for promoting tourism to Sarawak. To that end, the STB was founded in 1995 (Clark et al 1993:260; STB 1996). The STB is generously funded by the Sarawak State Government (for example, in 1995 and 1996 it received $9 million MYR) and works closely with the State and Federal Ministries of Tourism, as well as with longhouse tour companies.

In 1995, following another recommendation of the Masterplan, the STB began a major marketing campaign to promote Sarawak tourism, based around the theme 'Culture · Adventure · Nature'. This campaign focused on the three Western countries that supply the largest number of visitors to Sarawak each year, that is, the UK, Germany and France (*Sunday Tribune* 4 June 1996).[16] Since 1995 the STB has: participated in numerous world travel fairs (including Berlin, Milan and Paris); produced at least two major series of promotional brochures and posters and a promotional video titled *Sarawak Five Star Adventure*; set up a Sarawak Internet site;[17] published promotional CD ROMS, including *Sarawak The Hidden Paradise of Borneo;* distributed Sarawak travel marketing paraphernalia to Malaysia Travel Centres and Malaysian Airlines offices worldwide; and researched new tourist attractions, such as whitewater rafting.[18] Moreover, the STB markets Sarawak within Malaysia in order to promote domestic tourism and 1996 saw the start of a campaign on radio and in the print media aimed at

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[16] The STB's Culture · Adventure · Nature campaign should be seen a continuation of a general trend in Malaysia in the 1990s towards travel marketing directed at 'ecotourism'. As King noted in 1993, Malaysia has 'recently been very explicitly marketing itself as an adventure-land for environmental or 'green' holidays' (King 1993:31).

[17] See www.sarawaktourism.com

[18] One proposal considered operating organised scuba diving tours to the ruins of the longhouses that lie submerged beneath the Batang Ai Hydro Dam nearby to the Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort. The idea was eventually dropped as there is little visibility at the bottom of the dam and also because the STB came to the view that flooded Iban longhouses may not match with the idea of promoting Sarawak as a green, environmentally and socially responsible tourist attraction (pers.comm.James Masing, Heidi Munan).

promoting Sarawak tourism to peninsular Malaysians. Since 1995 the STB has also steadfastly marketed itself and throughout 1995, 1996 and 1997 newspaper reports on the STB's goals and achievements were a weekly feature in Sarawak's local newspapers. In 1995 the Sarawak Ministry of Tourism won the World Travel Market Global Travel Award for 'outstanding leadership and foresight in the travel industry' (STB 1996 8).

In contrast to the earlier efforts of the TPB and the STA, the STB's promotional strategy has been built on the research and recommendations of the Masterplan, as well as ongoing market analysis, made possible by the generous state funding it receives. Despite this, the STB's promotional products, while generally more up-market and far-reaching, have arguably reproduced and even refined the wild Borneo image of Sarawak and longhouse culture present in much of the earlier promotional material produced to market Sarawak and longhouse tours. For example, the most recent STB marketing includes a range of posters and brochures featuring sensational, stylised hand-drawn representations of Iban, longhouses, orang-utans and other markers of wild Borneo. Furthermore, the imagery shares a similarity with the early illustrations of Graham and Skipwith, as well as with the style of pictures found in popular adventure novels and 'Boy's Own' magazines from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Appendix F). Two examples of STB marketing are discussed later in the chapter along with an analysis of material from interviews with two senior Sarawak Government figures associated with the STB.

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A methodology for examining travel marketing

The following section outlines the methodology underpinning my analysis of the examples of promotional material for Sarawak and longhouse tours discussed later in the chapter.

Travel marketing media such as pamphlets, brochures, magazines, web sites and posters are a highly stylised and limited means of communication and they rely heavily on

'markers', that is, textual and visual signifiers that encapsulate or trigger certain discursive and conventional understandings of places, people and ideas.[19] Travel marketing media speak a 'language' of tourism that is particular in its heavy reliance on visual cliché, key words, and stereotypes. As Dann (1996) writing on tourism from a sociolinguistic perspective has noted:

> Whether the marker is a guidebook with asterisked attractions and accommodations, a map with icons of the spiel of a courier, it forms part and parcel of the language of tourism. Markers speak. They convey messages to tourists, and the latter in turn relay messages to other tourists and potential tourists. Moreover, markers communicate through a variety of media, both verbal and non-verbal. Whether what they say is true is quite another question (Dann 1996:10).

The limited and stylised language utilised by travel marketing media is related to its purpose, which is to successfully market travel products. Travel products vary considerably. For example, they can depict a nation state destination, such as 'Malaysia', or a specialised attraction such as 'Iban longhouses'. They can offer hotel resort packages or nature-based adventure tours, like African safaris.

Importantly, while travel, travel products and their marketing may differ, the economic motive that underpins the need for and application of marketing does not. In this view, a key characteristic of all travel marketing media is that the intention is to create a state of 'tourist desire' for a travel product, rather than to provide consumers with in-depth and exhaustive information on a subject (Silver 1993). As noted in Chapter Three in relation to tourism generally and as Zeppel's and Eide's work shows specifically in relation to longhouse tourism, tourists particularly desire 'authentic' experiences, which they usually define with reference to the 'key markers' for the destination that feature in the marketing (Zeppel 1993, 1994; Eide:1998). In achieving this goal, the main technique used by travel marketing media is to strategically omit some information about a product while employing a discursive, conventional language of tourism to define, communicate and exaggerate other aspects that are considered desirable for

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[19] More specifically, marketing media such as pamphlets, brochures, posters and so on are limited in the amount of information they can provide because of material limitations. However, this does not determine their content. For example, while a travel magazine selling South Pacific holidays might have a limited number of pages and limit their size due to printing costs this is separate to editorial decisions on content. With media such as web sites and promotional videos, the amount of time a tourist is willing to spend obtaining information limits the amount of information that can be provided (although videos and web sites have a far greater capacity for storage and communication of information, yet this also does not determine content).

tourists. At times this borders on misrepresentation, because what is most often emphasised in the marketing is the known tourist understanding of a product - which is simplistically portrayed through the language of tourism - while a more representative and factual rendering of the product (people, place and destination) is omitted. The set of views that characterise the idea of wild Borneo described in the previous chapter demonstrates a similar discursive convention. Cohen, writing on marketing designed to appeal to established tourists' views of the authentic, has described this process as 'the communicative staging of authenticity' (Cohen 1989:34-35).

With travel marketing media the simple textual and visual markers that shape the language of tourism make sense, and are understood and chosen because each marker is imbued with meaning and significance that has been fashioned over time. Cohen (1993), commenting in relation to 'touristic' images of 'native' peoples, has similarly noted that:

> The modern touristic establishment and a variety of other agents working in its periphery, produce a wide range of touristic images of native people explicitly intended for the attention, purchase or use by tourists. Major examples are post cards, brochures, posters, and a variety of souvenirs, art products and events featuring native people. However touristic images are neither born nor exist in a vacuum. They are formed, at least partly, under the influence of other kinds of images of these people, deriving from various other perspectives: ethnographic, rdigious, cultural, political (Cohen 1993:51-2).

In addition to Cohen's point here is that indigenous people, who share a history of being understood and characterised similarly by the West, are often portrayed in broadly the same way, and have a similar 'touristic image' in all travel marketing media intended for 'Western' tourists.[20] This point is confirmed in Zeppel's (1994) and Eide's (1998) analysis, which includes frequency analysis of tour brochure text and imagery. Said's concept of Orientalism, which defines the opposite or antithetical state to the West and Western 'culture', also provides a useful perspective, as travel brochures and magazines commonly group together and sell in a single 'catalogue', places and people that are

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[20] This can been seen in the similar language and style of imagery used to market a diversity of tours, such as those involving 'New Guinea Highlanders', 'Hill Tribes in Thailand', 'Australian Aborigines' and 'Iban longhouse communities'. As an example, Cohen's (1989) article *"Primitive and Remote": Hill Tribe Trekking in Thailand* provides examples of the marketing for hill tribe trekking that is remarkably similar in style and focus to the marketing for Sarawak and longhouse tours. Also, for examples from Melanesia see Douglas (1996) *They Came for Savages: 100 years of Tourism in Melanesia.* My assertion that the marketing for tours involving Australian

known by the West as foreign 'back regions' and home to 'exotic' indigenous others (Said:1978; MacCannell:1973, 1976). In travel brochures intended for Western consumers these 'exotic' indigenous groups are, as a rule, depicted as untouched by modernity (including any kind of development, modern technology or signs of a cash economy), adhering to unchanged pre-modern traditions and being in a timeless state of harmony with nature (Hitchcock et al 1993:14-15).[21] Furthermore, as the study of wild Borneo has shown in the previous chapter there are further specific markers and other, more refined, discursive traditions that relate to certain characteristics of how Borneo and the Iban are understood and represented in the West. These points form the primary basis for my analysis of travel marketing media for both Sarawak and Iban longhouse tours.

The examples discussed in the following section show how the specific and the general signifiers for the Iban and Sarawak inform the style and approach of relevant travel marketing and contribute to its effectiveness. Moreover, as with the texts I have discussed in relation to wild Borneo, most travel marketing utilises the key signifiers for a particular place or people ambiguously, reasserting and appealing to the established understanding, while allowing room for alternative interpretations. A common example is travel marketing material that includes imagery of locals in ceremonial costume yet provides only minimal information contextualising the image.

The significant point is that with indigenous people such as the Iban there are particular and multiple discursive traditions that affect how they are understood and how the West represents them or, as seen in the examples of marketing material produced in Kuching, how they are represented *for* the West. Travel marketing media appeals to these traditions – which are largely Western in origin and a continuation of certain historical themes, such as that of wild Borneo – because, generally, they are the most successful way of attracting tourists. Indeed, appealing to the easily recognised, the sensational or

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Aborigines is of a similar style and content is based on my own observations of the marketing material that is widely available in Australia.

[21] My observation here is based on travel brochures intended for Western consumers that I have examined in travel agencies in Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the UK and other European countries.

the peculiar explains why certain ideas and understanding are favoured and continue in travel marketing. As chapter Six demonstrates, the same tactic is used in the design and delivery of the longhouse tour product.

Furthermore, these ideas are often interwoven with local identity and utilised for local cultural, economic and political advantage by those with the power and opportunity to do so. With longhouse tourism, this is seen in the advantaged position that local Chinese tour operators and Malaysian state and federal agencies have in designing the marketing and format of longhouse tours, while longhouse communities are largely excluded from the process. As I demonstrate in this and later chapters, this typically means that an accurate or factual representation of contemporary Iban longhouse life is avoided in favour of marketing (and longhouse tour product) that speaks of the pre-established, easily recognised view, which, at least in the short and medium term, attracts tourists.

The following quotation, taken from the 'Destination Awareness Programme' section of the Masterplan, demonstrates how relevant the above considerations are for analysis of the Sarawak and longhouse tour industry and its promotional products:

> A market image establishes Sarawak in the minds of visitors, creates a desire to visit and an expectation of what will be found. It is important that the market image reflects what the visitor will see and experience, so there is no chance of mismatched expectation and disappointment [On page 231 the Masterplan observes that these mismatched expectations occur on longhouse tours]. To be successful all segments of the tourism industry must reinforce the sameimage, and products must be developed to meet expectations created by that image...The powerful visual combination of cultural and nature themes of Sarawak could be incorporated into the marketing image, specifically longhouses, headhunters, longboats, Brooke heritage, caves, birdsnesters, bats, the orang-utan, proboscis monkey, hornbill, butterflies, rainforest and rafflesia...The name "Borneo" is already famous worldwide with an established identity of headhunters and rainforest. The marketing image of Sarawak should capitalise on this strongly positioned name, and not be tempted to try to establish the comparatively little known "Sarawak" (Clark et al 1993:131).[22]

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[22] In an article entitled, 'Tourism Takes Off' printed in 'Discover Sarawak' (an STB publication), the Masterplan's observations are reiterated, almost word for word, by Sarawak's then Assistant Minister for Tourism, Dr James Masing. Dr Masing is quoted as stating: 'Locating and identifying Sarawak can be a big problem for Europeans and Americans. A lot of people simply don't know where it is: it could be any place between Africa and South America. Although we describe it as East Malaysia, Borneo has a much more romantic and better-known identity. For the European market we will be using Borneo in our promotional material' (STB 1996a:7).

As can be seen from the above, the Masterplan's recommendation comprises two key elements: first, it identifies how a successful marketing strategy should be conducted, that is, it should create a state of 'desire' and 'expectation' in the mind of the consumer (i.e. the tourists) and, to satisfy that desire, it encourages the reinforcement of certain 'matched' images and events, whatever their relationship may be to reality (Zeppel's and Eide's observation, noted in Chapter Three, that tourists to longhouses seek out expected cultural markers to authenticate their experience are pertinent here). The Masterplan's view is self-defining and circuitous: products must reflect the market image - an image that already exists - hence, the marketing will reflect the product. The direction is clearly towards marketing that does not break new ground or offer an alternative vision of Sarawak and, as shown in later chapters, this is reflected in the design and format of longhouse tours.

Secondly, the Masterplan identifies an eclectic collection of flora, fauna, geography, local history and, notably, longboats, longhouses and headhunters, which it asserts are well known 'themes' identified with Sarawak and Borneo (and key markers for wild Borneo) and that it suggests should be incorporated in the marketing to refresh the market image for Sarawak and stimulate interest in it as a destination.

Another significant characteristic of travel marketing media is that it relies heavily on the use of images (typically glossy colour photographs) as a communicative tool. Related to this point, and of central importance for understanding how the longhouse tourism industry currently operates, is a consideration of the central place of photography and images in tourism on the whole. For example, in the majority of travel marketing media, literary content (except for a basic itinerary) plays a supplementary role to glossy magazine-style photographs depicting the destinations and subjects of travel. As Urry (1990) has argued, all forms of modern tourism increasingly privilege the visual and much of the touristic pursuit is about the consumption of touristic imagery and of capturing 'good views' on film (Urry 1990:140). In another text, Urry comments, 'It [photography] has also helped construct a twentieth century sense of what is appropriately aesthetic and what is worth "sightseeing"' (Urry 1999:39).

Photography is the principal communicative device in marketing for Sarawak and longhouse tours and one of the strongest influences impacting on how tourists imagine and understand contemporary longhouse life. However, generally, the photographs used in travel marketing hide more than they reveal and omission and framing are what makes photography effective as a simple communicative device (Sontag 1984:123). Furthermore, as Sontag has pointed out, the visual nature of photography is that it offers an image and a 'slice of life' that is removed and decontextualised in relation to the viewer, while, at the same time, it allows 'participation' and knowledge of things with which the viewer has no immediate relationship:

> Photography, which has so many narcissistic uses, is also a powerful instrument for depersonalising our relation to the world; and the two uses are complementary. Like a pair of binoculars with no right or wrong end, the camera makes exotic things near, intimate, and familiar things small, abstract, strange, much farther away. It offers, in one easy habitforming activity, both participation and alienation in our own lives and those of others-allowing us to participate while confirming alienation (Sontag 1984:167).

As Sontag observes, photography acts, on one level, to 'depersonalise' the viewer's relationship to the things depicted by the photograph. A well-known example is the way that news media photographs of war and conflict allow the viewer (if he or she is distant from it) to develop a simple visual understanding and knowledge of what those involved look like (for example, their dress and ethnicity) and how the conflict is being fought (the terrain, technology and so on) but no personal understanding of the individuals involved, such as their names (Virilio 1989). Often they are just photographs. In this context, it is significant that many (if not the majority) of tourists first 'see' the Iban (and other similar subjects in travel marketing) via photographs in media, such as travel brochures, web sites and travel books, such that the initial relationship established is that of the detached, depersonalised viewer of a photograph.[23]

Furthermore, as Sontag (1984), Barthes (1972, 1981) and Berger (1972, 1980) have all argued conclusively, photographs frame and shape the relationship that the viewer has

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[23] A consideration here is that much of Sontag's thesis, as it relates to photographs and tourism, also applies to painting and other visual media. For example, Paul Gauguin's romanticised and sexualised paintings of Tahitian women from the 1890s (such as *The Spirit of Dead Watching* painted in 1892) effect the same relationship between viewer and subject and they have been utilised in travel marketing (see Silver (1993) for further discussion). Of further interest is that the illustrations in Bock (1881), discussed in Chapter Four (see Figure 9), share a remarkable

with the subject or object of the photograph, including the viewer's knowledge of, and attitude towards, that which is depicted. In this way, travel marketing imagery not only markets what tourists want to see, and teaches them what to expect, it also partially shapes and defines how tourists 'see' the subjects and attractions of longhouse tours – the Iban and their longhouses. In addition, in order to understand longhouse tourist marketing and its effect, analysis of photography needs to be supplemented with a reminder that late twentieth century advertising involves extreme appeals to desire through high-colour photographic fabrication and fantasy.

Tour brochures

In the following discussion of travel brochures, I use the headings 'out-bound' and 'in-bound' because these categories represent a basic division in the Sarawak travel industry. 'Out-bound' travel agencies are the travel service providers in the country from which the tourist originates. They offer the package holidays through which most tourists (and longhouse tourists) arrive in Sarawak and, accordingly, they produce their own brochures and other marketing material to attract potential customers from their home countries. A well-known example of an out-bound company that services Malaysia is Thomas Cook Travel, based in the UK.[24] 'In-bound' travel agencies are the travel service providers in the destination country and they include businesses such as longhouse tour companies, local hotels, and local airlines. In-bound travel agents produce their own brochures locally to provide information to the tourists they receive through international package tour connections and to market their services locally. The brochures and pamphlets produced by out-bound tour operators in Europe (or in other travel hubs for Western tourists traffic, such as Hong Kong) differ slightly from the material produced by in-bound tour operators in Malaysia and Kuching. To some extent this is undoubtedly because production occurs in different countries. However, it

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similarity with Gauguin's images of Tahitian 'natives' and demonstrate that stylised images of wild people were widely found, and a recognisable and marketable commodity, in other late nineteenth century colonial contexts.

[24] Thomas Cook founded in the UK in 1841, is generally regarded as the originator of organised mass tours and the first company to publish mass-produced travel brochures (for further reading see Brendon (1991)).

is also because in-bound and out-bound marketing media are produced to appeal to different tourist markets.

Nevertheless, as is shown in the following discussion, there is little variation in the characteristics and key marketing techniques of out-bound and in-bound travel brochures.[25] This is a similar phenomenon to that shown in Chapter Three in relation to the similarity of the longhouse tour product that is marketed across the range of longhouse tours offered by different companies.[26] Furthermore, previous studies by Kedit (1980b and 1993), Kadir Din (1995), Zeppel (1994) and Eide (1998) point to longhouse tours having retained the same format and style over the last 25 years or so.

Out-bound travel brochures

As discussed in Chapter Three, the majority of tourists to longhouses are from Western countries and on package tours of some kind. In Western countries, when a tourist enquires at a travel agent or airline office about a holiday to Malaysia or South-East Asia he or she will be handed one or more glossy brochures with basic information about country destinations, holiday packages and their cost, and attractions in the region. For some tourists, brochures of this kind constitute the first fragment of information about Sarawak they encounter when considering a holiday to Malaysia or South-East Asia and the first time they have encountered the contemporary tourist industry version of wild Borneo and images representing many of the common themes such as 'headhunters', 'natives' and 'longhouses'.

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[25] Although I examine the promotional material of individual tour companies the focus is to identify and critique the general field of Sarawak tourism and longhouse tour marketing. In-depth analysis of the particularities of each company's marketing material is outside the scope of this thesis. However, in Chapter Seven I make an exception to examine the marketing material of AOS in order to explain the history of the company's 'adoption' of the Stamang longhouse community.

[26] Whilst there are differences in how longhouse tourism is managed and the arrangements that tourist longhouse communities have with tour companies, the basic product varies only slightly. It consists of tourists observing longhouse life, watching dance routines staged by longhouse residents dressed in traditional costume and viewing demonstrations of cock fighting and blowpipe shooting (these are described in Chapter Six).

Out-bound travel brochures are the least informative of all travel brochures and in most cases they rely heavily on colourful imagery. They are printed in the home countries of Western tourists and compiled from material produced by in-bound tour operators in the destination country with which the out-bound tour operator has a contract. A process of 'double reductionism' takes place before the final out-bound travel brochure is produced. For example, with a package tour that includes a flight to Kuching, accommodation at the Holiday Inn and a longhouse tour, information on the local portion of the package will have been provided to the out-bound tour operator by the in-bound company or companies responsible for the local content of the package tour. This includes longhouse tour companies. The out-bound tour operator will then have used the information provided by in-bound travel agents to produce its travel brochures (and other marketing media), by repackaging it and presenting it in a way that appeals to potential tourists from Western countries when they first enquire about an overseas holiday. This has the general effect of further simplifying in the out-bound travel brochures the messages, ideas and information contained in the in-bound travel brochures.[27]

The process typically results in a magazine-style brochure being produced, often covering an entire region, such as 'South-East Asia', with a single or double-page spread devoted to each country.[28] Frequently, photographic images of people and places, with short textual captions alongside are accompanied by a set of prices in the same way that products in a shopping catalogue are displayed. Accordingly, the brochure reader must consider the package, like any other product for sale in a

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[27] An extreme example of how distanced longhouse residents can eventually become from the promotional products produced was the promotional campaign run by Hilton Hotels International for the new Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort. Photographers contracted to the Hilton were sent to Stamang to photograph Tuai Rumah Sunok who is well-known for his abundant traditional tattoos. Tuai Rumah agreed to do the shoot for free in order to promote tourism to Stamang because (as noted in the following chapter) AOS also ran tours to Stamang direct from the Batang Ai Hilton. For the shoot Tuai Rumah was asked to dress up in 'traditional' costume including being asked to remove his wristwatch and change into a loincloth. Three months later a series of place mats featuring a large portrait of the Tuai Rumah were mass-produced for use in the restaurants of the Kuching and Batang Ai Hiltons. Two years later the same image was used worldwide for Hilton Hotel's international advertising campaign featuring world leaders who had stayed in Hilton hotels during globally-recognised events (for example Winston Churchill during the signing of the Malta treaty). For this campaign, Tuai Rumah Sunok's portrait was reproduced (the same size) next to a large portrait of Nelson Mandela.

[28] Tourism texts in other media are also produced as a result of this process. For example, recently, in my local branch of the Malaysian Tourism Office (Perth, Australia), which sells out-bound holiday packages in association with Malaysian Airlines, cardboard cut-outs of Iban warriors, palm trees and longhouses have been featured in the window display.

catalogue, in terms of price, value and appropriateness. As Sontag has argued, 'through photographs we have a consumer's relation to events' (Sontag 1984:154), and travel brochures of the kind discussed here both appeal to and assert this relationship as a result of the way they simplistically juxtapose the objects of tourism - signified in colourful photographs of the exotic - with the pricing for various travel packages.

The brochure *Intrepid South East Asia 1997,* published jointly by Qantas, Tourism Malaysia and Intrepid Travel Pty Ltd (Intrepid) is a typical example of a travel brochure produced by an out-bound travel agency.[29] The brochure is a magazine-style publication that includes several short sections (varying in length from two to four pages) on Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, 'Borneo' and Indonesia. The last page is a 'Special Adventures' section including: 'Hanoi to Hong Kong Overland', 'Vietnam Unplugged', 'Vietnam for Softies', 'Hill Cycling Adventure',[30] 'Borneo Unplugged', 'Kalimantan Unplugged' and 'The Epicurean Adventure'. Pages 24 to 26 of the brochure are devoted to 'Borneo' and feature tours to Sarawak and Sabah. Under the heading 'Sarawak 15 days ex Miri' the brochure offers the following information:

> This is a trip exploring Borneo as it was before the colonial powers arrived. We meet Iban people and stay in their longhouses, explore Mulu National Park with some of he biggest cave systems in the world, magnificent rivers and rainforests. And we trek to the Pinnacles something few in this world can claim (Intrepid 1997:24).

As this passage shows, 'Borneo' is a significant marker for 'the wild' and for 'adventure', because it is used as the principal label, rather than the word 'Sarawak', with tours to Sarawak and Sabah listed separately underneath. The introductory text refrains from mentioning Sarawak, locating the tour in 'Borneo as it was before the colonial powers arrived', and it is clear that Borneo and not Sarawak is the prime advertising 'hook'. The brochure proceeds to sketch the details of the tour on a day-by-day basis. In paragraph five, under the heading 'Days 11-12', the following information on 'longhouses' is provided:

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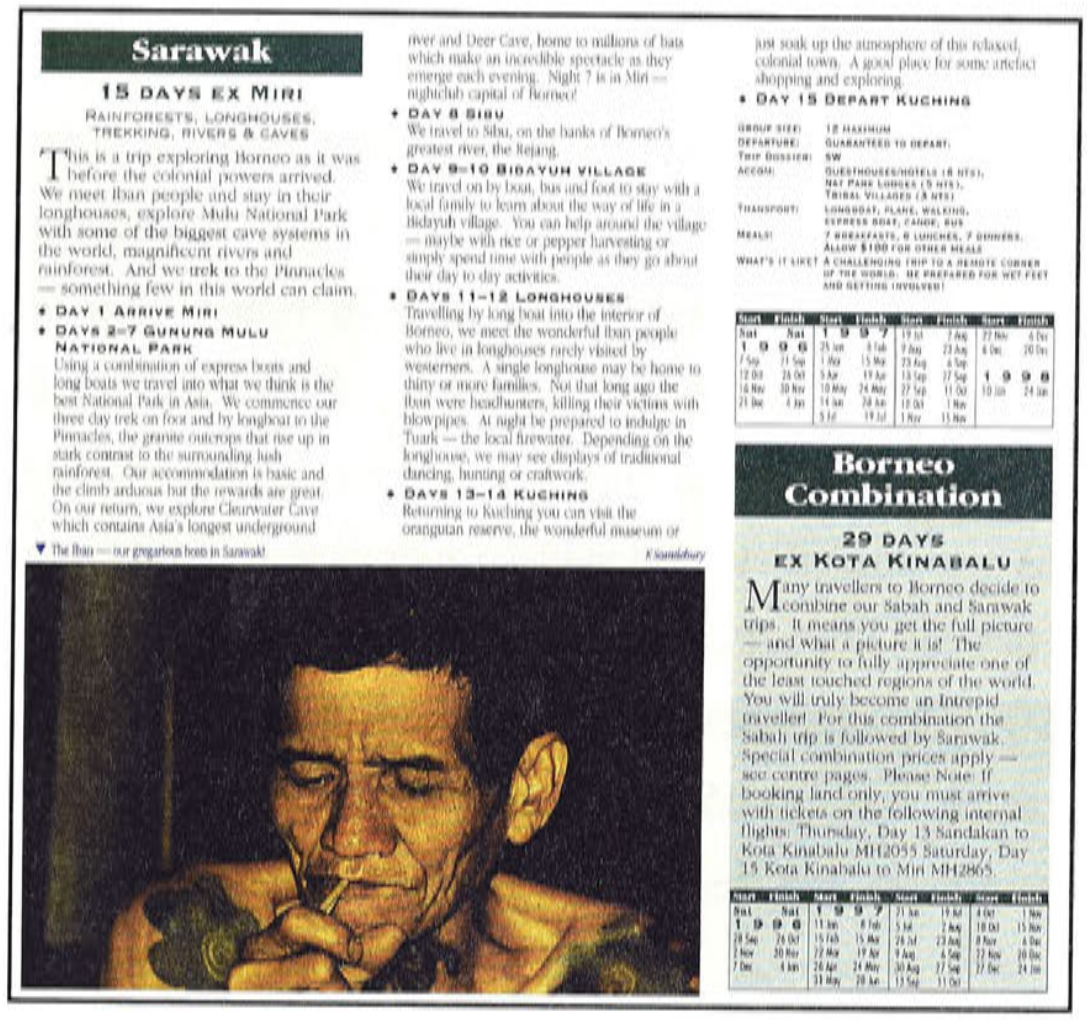
[29] Intrepid is an adventure travel company based in Melbourne, Australia. It is linked closely with Lonely Planet publications, which is also based in Melbourne.

[30] This refers to cycling the 'hill tribe' area in northern Thailand (for an interesting discussion on hill tribe trekking in Thailand see Cohen (1989)).

> Travelling by long boat into the interior of Borneo, we meet the wonderful Iban people who live in longhouses rarely visited by westerners. A single longhouse may be home to thirty or more families. Not that long ago the Iban were headhunters, killing their victims with blowpipes. At night be prepared to indulge in Tuark - the local firewater. Depending on the longhouse, we may see displays of traditional dancing, hunting or craftwork (Intrepid 1997:24).

The quotation is typical of out-bound tour brochures, as it is severely limited in information content, imprecise, and, in part, misleading. The verbal text is complemented by a postcard-size image (Figure 14) of a tattooed Iban man smoking a homemade cigarette, with the label, 'The Iban - our gregarious hosts in Sarawak'.[31]



Sarawak

15 DAYS EX MIRI

RAINFORESTS, LONGHOUSES, TREKKING, RIVERS & CAVES

This is a trip exploring Borneo as it was before the colonial powers arrived. We meet Iban people and stay in their longhouses, explore Mulu National Park with some of the biggest cave systems in the world, magnificent rivers and rainforest. And we trek to the Pinnacles — something few in this world can claim.

♦ DAY 1 ARRIVE MIRI

♦ DAYS 2–7 GUNUNG MULU NATIONAL PARK

Using a combination of express boats and long boats we travel into what we think is the best National Park in Asia. We commence our three day trek on foot and by longboat to the Pinnacles, the granite outcrops that rise up in stark contrast to the surrounding lush rainforest. Our accommodation is basic and the climb arduous but the rewards are great. On our return, we explore Clearwater Cave which contains Asia's longest underground river and Deer Cave, home to millions of bats which make an incredible spectacle as they emerge each evening. Night 7 is in Miri — nightclub capital of Borneo!

♦ DAY 8 SIBU

We travel to Sibu, on the banks of Borneo's greatest river, the Rejang.

♦ DAY 9–10 BIDAYUH VILLAGE

We travel on by boat, bus and foot to stay with a local family to learn about the way of life in a Bidayuh village. You can help around the village — maybe with rice or pepper harvesting or simply spend time with people as they go about their day to day activities.

♦ DAYS 11–12 LONGHOUSES

Travelling by long boat into the interior of Borneo, we meet the wonderful Iban people who live in longhouses rarely visited by westerners. A single longhouse may be home to thirty or more families. Not that long ago the Iban were headhunters, killing their victims with blowpipes. At night be prepared to indulge in Tuark — the local firewater. Depending on the longhouse, we may see displays of traditional dancing, hunting or craftwork.

♦ DAYS 13–14 KUCHING

Returning to Kuching you can visit the orangutan reserve, the wonderful museum or just soak up the atmosphere of this relaxed, colonial town. A good place for some artefact shopping and exploring.

♦ DAY 15 DEPART KUCHING

GROUP SIZE: 12 MAXIMUM
DEPARTURE: GUARANTEED TO DEPART.
TRIP DOSSIER: SW
ACCOM: GUESTHOUSES/HOTELS (8 NTS), NAT PARK LODGES (5 NTS), TRIBAL VILLAGES (3 NTS)
TRANSPORT: LONGBOAT, PLANE, WALKING, EXPRESS BOAT, CANOE, BUS
MEALS: 7 BREAKFASTS, 6 LUNCHES, 7 DINNERS. ALLOW $100 FOR OTHER MEALS
WHAT'S IT LIKE? A CHALLENGING TRIP TO A REMOTE CORNER OF THE WORLD. BE PREPARED FOR WET FEET AND GETTING INVOLVED!

Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish
Sat	Sat	1997		19 Jul	2 Aug	27 Nov	6 Dec
1996		25 Jan	8 Feb	9 Aug	23 Aug	4 Dec	20 Dec
7 Sep	21 Sep	1 Mar	15 Mar	23 Aug	6 Sep		
12 Oct	26 Oct	5 Apr	19 Apr	13 Sep	27 Sep	1998	
16 Nov	30 Nov	10 May	24 May	27 Sep	11 Oct	10 Jan	24 Jan
21 Dec	4 Jan	14 Jun	28 Jun	18 Oct	1 Nov		
		5 Jul	19 Jul	1 Nov	15 Nov		

The Iban — our gregarious hosts in Sarawak! K Scarisbrick

Borneo Combination

29 DAYS
EX KOTA KINABALU

Many travellers to Borneo decide to combine our Sabah and Sarawak trips. It means you get the full picture — and what a picture it is! The opportunity to fully appreciate one of the least touched regions of the world. You will truly become an Intrepid traveller! For this combination the Sabah trip is followed by Sarawak. Special combination prices apply — see centre pages. Please Note: If booking land only, you must arrive with tickets on the following internal flights: Thursday, Day 13 Sandakan to Kota Kinabalu MH2055 Saturday, Day 15 Kota Kinabalu to Miri MH2865.

Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish
Sat	Sat	1997		21 Jun	19 Jul	4 Oct	1 Nov
1996		11 Jan	8 Feb	5 Jul	2 Aug	18 Oct	15 Nov
28 Sep	26 Oct	15 Feb	15 Mar	26 Jul	23 Aug	8 Nov	6 Dec
2 Nov	30 Nov	22 Mar	19 Apr	9 Aug	6 Sep	22 Nov	20 Dec
7 Dec	4 Jan	26 Apr	24 May	30 Aug	27 Sep	27 Dec	24 Jan
		31 May	28 Jun	13 Sep	11 Oct		

Figure 14: Image from Intrepid 'South East Asia' brochure 1997.

The man in the picture is a resident of Murat longhouse on the Skrang River. As noted in Chapter Two, Murat has been an established tourist longhouse since the mid 1960s. The image shown in Figure 14 does not contain any obvious signs of modernisation and the brochure asserts that longhouses 'rarely visited by westerners' are part of the tour. Even a cursory consideration of this concept reveals its difficulties, given that the longhouses in question are being marketed as part of a package tour available for purchase from many (Australian) travel agents. Yet statements about 'undiscovered' or

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[31] This same image appears as a colour illustration in *The Intrepid Guide to South East Asia* published by the same travel company (Turner 1994:224).

'rarely visited' longhouses are not uncommon in longhouse tour marketing. In particular, sales staff in some of Kuching's less scrupulous longhouse tour agencies (and some freelance tour guides) make statements of this kind when delivering their sales pitch. The text of the Intrepid brochure also describes the Iban as 'headhunters ... not that long ago', which suggests that headhunting was a widespread practice in recent times when, in fact, it was not commonplace from the late nineteenth century onwards.[32] The brochure adds further drama to the pitch by claiming that Iban 'headhunters' killed their victims 'with blowpipes'.

The significance of the statements and the image in the brochure is threefold: first, simple textual and visual markers characteristic of the language of tourism are used to evoke the traditional themes of wild Borneo, which then becomes associated and established as a key part of the market image of the tour product. Secondly, the approach limits the language and imagery used and no attempt is made to depict the Iban and longhouse life in a way that enables tourists to consider an alternate view to the stereotype. If they want to, tourists can of course seek out additional information independently. However, in my observation of tourists to longhouses, they generally do not do so.[33] Presumably the travel marketing industry also relies upon tourists not seeking additional information that might contest the established market image. Thirdly, the statements in the brochure make an appeal to what could be termed 'international tourist folklore', by attempting to evoke tourist adventure tales, following the style of those of Martin and Osa Johnson outlined in Chapter Four. The imagery that accompanies the text is skilfully positioned on the page to assist in evoking this effect. As Cohen and Urry have suggested, the tourist is encouraged, or may in fact expect, to suspend rational thought for the duration of the trip and 'play' at being an adventurer (Cohen 1988; Urry 1990). An implicit invitation is extended to be part of a Hollywood-style jungle escapade involving visits to 'gregarious' natives who treat the tourists' arrival with open arms, wild drinking sessions and general merrymaking. The

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[32] See footnote 2, Chapter Two.

[33] In recent years the growth of travel-related and travel industry-run web sites has increased the ease with which tourists can access additional information about a destination or travel product. However, as many frequent users of the web will attest, the mass of information available, particularly that of a commercial nature, is not of a high standard. For example, a search of Sarawak and longhouse tour web sites reveals a mass of material of much the same quality and style as that found in the travel brochures.

brochure sets out several 'markers' for a wild Borneo adventure, including the use of the term 'firewater' to describe the local alcoholic drink *tuak* (misspelled as 'Tuark') and by the suggested desire to visit 'undiscovered' or rarely visited locations.

Similarly, on the page following the one depicted at Figure 14, the reader is presented with a double-page spread that includes: an image of a longboat on a river with a group of local people unloading goods onto the riverbank with the caption 'Longboats - our main means of travel in Sarawak'; a postcard-sized image of an orang-utan with the caption 'Orang-utans - reason enough to visit Borneo'; a picture of a turtle labelled 'Nesting turtles - a highlight of Sabah, Borneo'; and a curious image of a Western woman laughing and standing amongst a group of five New Guinea Highlanders wearing large, shoulder high, penis gourds (Intrepid 1997:25). This last image is accompanied by a caption reading, 'Irian Jaya - simply amazing'. The inclusion of the image of the tourist in Irian Jaya suggests an appeal to international trends in what may be variously described as nature tourism, ecotourism, culture tourism, indigenous tourism, or adventure tourism (Weaver 2001:1-2) (Boissevain 1996:6).[34] These trends follow conventional Western understandings of the wild with a focus on exoticism, including ambivalent eroticism. In the text box next to the image the brochure explains that Intrepid offers, 'A huge range of adventures and we have something for everyone...We like to see the region in all its diversity, experiencing the local culture and meeting the people' (Intrepid 1997:25). The view is that all indigenous people are similar, but that different indigenous groups provide a diversity of product within a market segment defined by tourists who desire an indigenous or 'native' experience.

A more recent example of an out-bound travel brochure is the Tourism Malaysia and New Horizons Holidays' *Malaysia and Borneo 2001/2002* brochure (New Horizons 2001). Like the previous example, the brochure is typical of out-bound marketing of its kind, being a magazine-style publication consisting of 20 pages of high-gloss imagery

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[34] The international tourism industry uses the five terms rather fluidly, depending on which term is perceived to be fashionable. Anthropological writing closely follows this tradition with a similar haphazard application of the terms in most publications. In the case of longhouse tourism I suggest that the five terms apply equally well, as the marketed attraction includes 'eco' or 'nature' attractions, such as orang-utans, as well as 'adventure' 'indigenous', and 'culture', which is characterised by the Iban.

of various destinations, people, activities and hotels, alongside text boxes and tables providing information on prices, hotel facilities and general information on the various regions marketed. Each page in the brochure is devoted to a particular town or region in Malaysia, such as Kuala Lumpur or Penang, and Sarawak and Sabah receive a page each. The brochure is essentially for marketing holiday packages in association with hotels throughout Malaysia and if a tourist wishes to link a particular hotel package with a longhouse tour the travel agent provides additional material on longhouse tours.

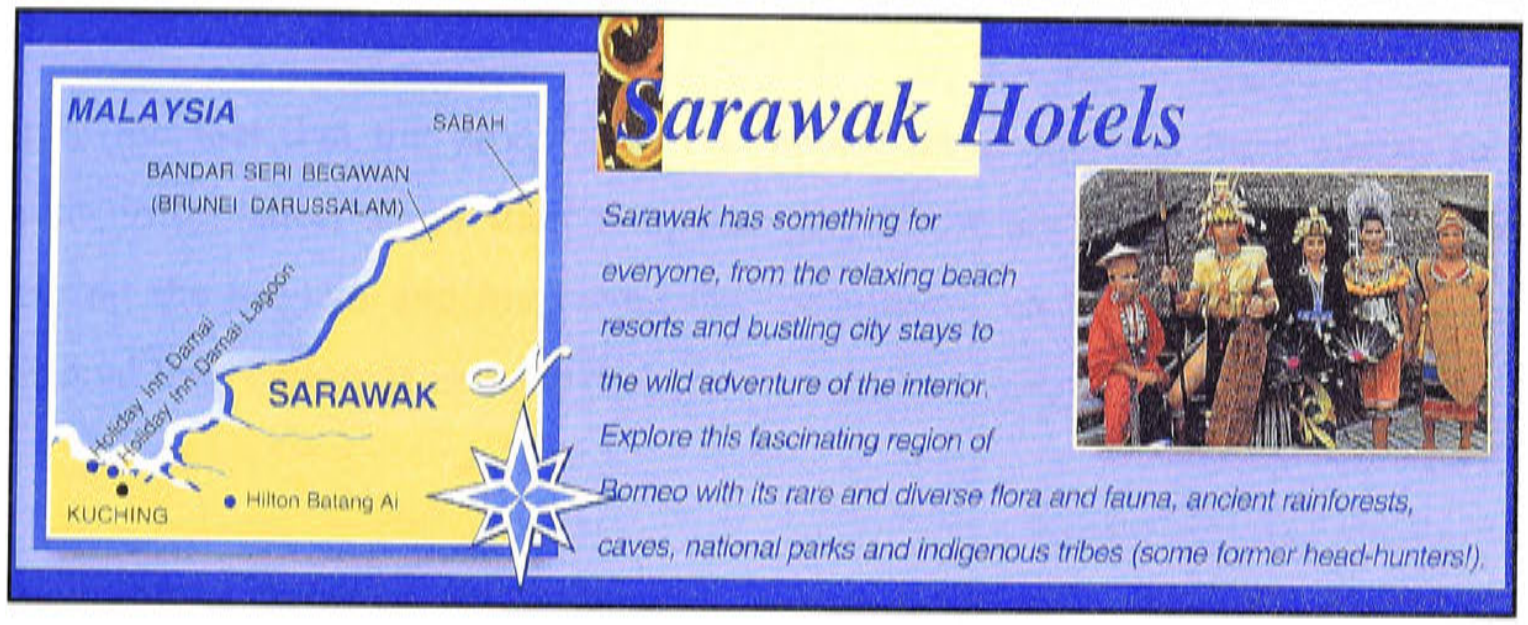

Figure 15: Image from Tourism Malaysia Brochure 2001/2002.

As can be seen from Figure 15, the banner for the page on Sarawak Hotels shows an image of a selection of Sarawak's indigenous people dressed in 'traditional' costume, including an Iban woman in ceremonial attire and an Iban 'warrior' with a shield and blowpipe (New Horizons 2001:16). The group is shown posing on the veranda of a longhouse built from thatch and wood. The longhouse is, in fact, one of several purpose-built 'traditional' longhouses at the Sarawak Cultural Village, the theme park located outside Kuching.

Like the earlier brochure, this banner communicates via simple, familiar visual markers and with language that has more effect if the reader is already familiar with a conventional understanding of Borneo as 'wild', a home of 'head-hunters' and a place of 'adventure'. The appeal to wild Borneo themes is explicit. Indeed, on the opposite page, which is devoted to 'Sabah Hotels', the banner information suggests 'climb Mt Kinabalu or visit the "Wild Man of Borneo" at the Sepilok Orang Utan Sanctuary'. Further, the image accompanying the text encourages the reader to interpret the

individuals shown as examples of the 'former head-hunters' referred to in the text. There is no indication that the people pictured should be considered with any other view in mind and certainly not as 'modern' peers of the tourist. There is an essential blurring of the past and the present which is characteristic of longhouse tours (and which is illustrated and discussed in Chapters Six and Seven).

In-bound travel brochures

Despite the fact that the producers of in-bound travel material have access to more genuine information about their subjects, they show an even greater propensity for obscuring the modern and marketing the 'primitive'. A fantastic and fake image of traditional Iban culture is presented as the reality of contemporary longhouse life.

Most in-bound Sarawak and longhouse tour brochures are designed and printed in Kuching, with a few exceptions printed in Singapore. As the industry is focussed on Western tourists (and the number of domestic tourists who take longhouse tours is insignificant), very few Malay and Chinese-language in-bound tour brochures are produced. In fact, I only encountered one such brochure (in Malay) and it was about 'traditional design motifs' of Sarawak's indigenous people. The material is almost exclusively in English, although some tour companies supply A4 size, photocopied, fact sheets in other European languages such as German.

Before discussing specific examples of these locally-produced brochures, it is worthwhile considering the context in which they are displayed and in which tourists encounter them. The context is significantly more complex than that of out-bound brochures and, like the images and text contained within them, the brochures themselves are strategically located to have the greatest impact.

The majority of tourists to longhouses depart from Kuching's upmarket hotels and this is where the largest proportion of locally-produced brochures are found, placed on hotel

foyer furniture or the front desk of the hotel's in-house travel agent.[35] Furthermore, hotel staff will often give the brochure of a particular longhouse tour company to tourists on arrival if the staff are aware that the tourist has a longhouse tour booked.

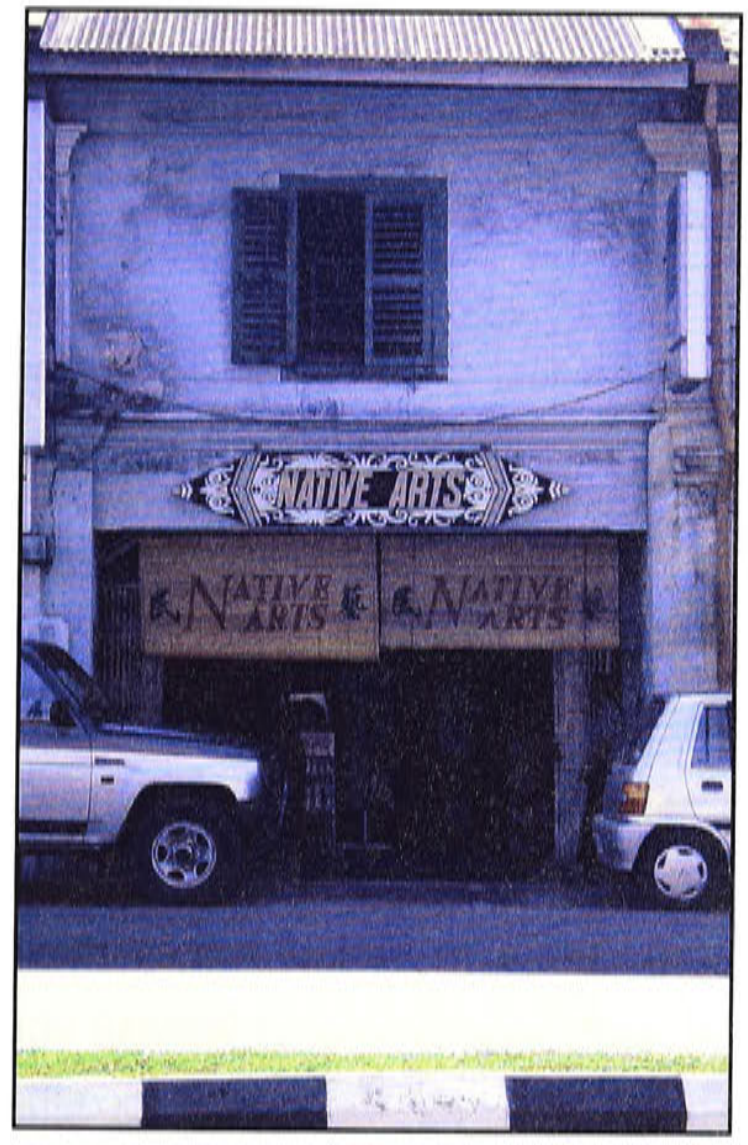

Figure 16: Native Arts (handicraft/curio shop), Jalan Main Bazaar, Kuching.

However, in addition to circulation through hotels, locally-produced brochures are found in art galleries, curio shops that sell 'native handicrafts' and souvenir shops located in the centre of downtown Kuching (Figure 16).[36] These galleries and shops specialise in selling a wide range of 'traditional' (often labelled as 'primitive') souvenirs, 'antiques', handicrafts, 'art' and carvings. The items for sale in each shop vary from locally-produced, cheap, tourist souvenirs (such as miniature blowpipes made from bamboo and 'headhunter key rings'), through to wooden figurines, wooden drums, ceramic antique Chinese jars, Iban *pua kumbu* textiles and carved sections of wooden

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[35] Many large hotels in Sarawak have in-house travel agents, which are outposts of established local operators. In some cases, a number of the local agents may be represented by a 'desk' in the lobby, much like hire car companies at an airport.

[36] The majority of these galleries and shops are found along Jalan Main Bazaar and Jalan Carpenter, two streets that run adjacent to the Kuching waterfront (see Map 3, Chapter Two), and interspersed among them are the shopfronts of longhouse tour companies. An example of one of the older, more established and successful ventures in this area of Kuching is the shop 'Nelson's Gallery-Primitive Art'.

longhouses (such as window shutters).[37] Much of the carved material for sale (particularly the wooden figurines) is crafted to appeal to a generic 'primitive' aesthetic and is not produced in Sarawak or anywhere on the island of Borneo, but in Bali and Sumatra (although there are also some genuine antiques).[38] The majority of the material is representative of Sarawak and Bornean longhouse culture (including, Iban, Kayan, Kenyah etc) and there is some Punan material, as well as Malay and Chinese.

The content of Kuching's art and craft shops, and the form and style of the items for sale in them, are noteworthy because they play an indirect but important role in the marketing for longhouse tours. From an outsider's perspective these shops are conspicuous for their aesthetic quality, which ranges from a ramshackle bazaar look, in which pieces are often placed together in piles, on the ground or on dusty shelves, creating a generally disorganised and run-down appearance that suggests that the visitor may be fortunate enough to 'discover' a lost 'tribal treasure', to a gallery-style shop, where each piece, whether a carved figurine or an Iban textile, is displayed in a manner (including by individually lighting them or placing them on stands or behind glass) that suggests that they should be viewed as 'art'. The pieces are labelled and priced accordingly.

Depending on the style of business, sales staff will emphasise the antiquity or rarity of the items (such as certain types of textiles and particular pieces of jewellery), the difficulties faced in sourcing items from 'remote' longhouse communities or the skills of present-day longhouse communities in carving, weaving and other craftwork. Whether the emphasis is on 'past' or 'present' longhouse life, there is a general reliance on linking the products for sale with the established themes of wild Borneo. Moreover, both styles present the items for sale as a kind of material culture or ethnographic

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[37] Also important is a daily trade in cheap, mass-produced 'Sarawak' souvenirs such as printed tea towels.

[38] Evans (2000) writing on souvenirs, economic diversification and cultural development has described this kind of market as 'post-Fordism has arrived as one indigenous group undercuts another, to the benefit of Western buyers' (Evans 2000:132).

evidence of the 'traditional' lifestyles of the indigenous peoples of Sarawak and Borneo.[39]

In this way, Kuching's galleries and curio shops have a complementary marketing relationship with the longhouse tour companies (and the travel brochures they produce). With the shops that sell 'traditional' items on the basis that they are a product of present-day longhouse communities, the suggestion is that there are numerous 'traditional' longhouse communities that continue to produce such items. Correspondingly, the nearby tour companies that promote tours to 'traditional' longhouse communities suggest that the communities that produce the traditional handicrafts and other authentic wares for sale can be accessed through a tour. With the shops that focus on past longhouse culture and sell 'antiques' and 'rarities', the relationship is less directly complementary. Nevertheless they still generally reinforce the major themes associated with Borneo, which, in turn, continue to inform the marketing and the itinerary of longhouse tours.

In addition, tour operators and curio shop owners construct dramatic folklore in order to enhance the appeal of their product. As mentioned in Chapter Two, one tour operator told me that he had discovered his own isolated tribe on the Skrang River and that for a small fee he could take me to a longhouse that was virtually unchanged since the days of headhunting. On other occasions, shop owners spoke of the 'expeditions' they had undertaken to collect the various 'tribal' wares that they had on display for sale.

In this environment, travel brochures and other marketing techniques, such as billboards and the sales pitches of local travel industry staff, merge and become one with the content of the galleries and bazaars. Furthermore, the marketing techniques used by both the longhouse tour companies and the stores demonstrate a familiarity with the particular themes of wild Borneo and a skill for applying them to business. In addition

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[39] Cohen notes a similar approach with the selling of hill tribe tours in Thailand (Cohen 1989). In addition, the collected essays in Hitchcock and Teague's (2000) publication *Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Tourism* make frequent reference to this phenomenon. Graburn's (1976) early work *Ethnic and Tourist Arts, Cultural Expressions from the First World* also engages substantively with this issue.

to use as a marketing technique with particular appeal to Western tourists, local businesses capitalise on various interpretations of the wild Borneo tradition because it is a part of a local, indigenous (including Chinese and Malay) Bornean identity (Saunders 1993:25). Graburn's (1976) early observations on the 'boundary-defining' role of 'ethnic' and 'tourist' art in the 'fourth world' are noteworthy here. Graburn writes:

> Those arts made for an external dominant world; these have often been despised by connoisseurs as unimportant, and are sometimes called "tourist" or "airport" arts. They are, however, important in presenting to the outside world an ethnic image that must be maintained and projected as a part of the all-important boundary-defining system. All human social groups, from the family to the United Nations, need symbols of their internal and external boundaries; the practical and decorative arts often provide these essential markers (Graburn 1976:5).

Graburn highlights the boundary he sees between ethnic 'fourth world' people and the 'outside world'. However, he also comments on 'internal' boundaries within social groups. In the Sarawak context Graburn's comments are a reminder that longhouse tours and the marketing of Kuching souvenir, curio and antique shops are part of a system of commerce and representation that occurs between ethnic groups and which relies significantly on distinguishing between them. Furthermore, Graburn stresses that 'practical and decorative arts' are frequently used as key boundary-defining 'markers' for different ethnic groups. Graburn's point is exemplified by the pictorial content of longhouse tour brochures and the stock of Kuching antique, curio and souvenir shops. Furthermore, in Kuching and across Sarawak, it is Sarawak Chinese, rather than longhouse people, who use wild Borneo's local and global identity most skilfully for commercial gain. Sarawak Chinese dominate the membership of the STA and own and manage most Sarawak longhouse tour companies.

The complex marketing and commercial environment of the industry is important in relation to the tourists whose decision to take a longhouse tour was made before arriving in Kuching, usually as part of a wider package tour. Tourists on package tours generally have 'free time' to utilise for shopping, and the galleries and curio shops along Kuching's waterfront are generally where hotel staff will direct them. Whether a tourist encounters one of the curio shops prior to or after their longhouse tour the effect is much the same. For example, if encountered prior to a tour, the appearance of the shops and the merchandise for sale suggest or reinforce many wild Borneo themes such

as 'headhunting' (replica Iban 'headhunter' swords with carved bone handles and human hair attached are a common item), primitiveness, remote jungle living and lack of modernity. Similarly, if tourists visit the shops after a longhouse tour the handicrafts, carvings, and textiles match those that they will have seen in the longhouse. In this way, the shops suggest that the kind of Iban culture and lifestyle that longhouse tours promote, and which will have been evident during tours in the form of staged dance performances, blowpipe demonstrations, specially made handicrafts and so on, is in abundance in contemporary Sarawak and that Iban and other longhouse communities continue to produce a wealth of 'primitive' curios and exotic material culture.[40]

My observations in the tourist heart of downtown Kuching suggest that, in addition to longhouse tour companies, other local tourism-related businesses are complicit in hawking Sarawak and longhouse culture by appealing to wild Borneo themes. The most complementary and successful relationship is the one that I have described between longhouse tour companies and the galleries and curio shops. However, Kuching's major hotels, local craft shops and other tourism-related businesses are also involved. The tourist in Kuching is confronted with the same message on all fronts and, overwhelmingly, the message is that, beyond Kuching, in Sarawak's back regions, indigenous people, particularly longhouse residents, are still living unchanged, 'traditional' lives.

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[40] This point raises several complex issues about the Sarawak handicraft industry, including which handicrafts are produced by longhouse communities and on what basis. For example, some handicrafts for sale in Kuching, such as hand woven mats and baskets, are made by longhouse communities in the course of everyday longhouse life. However, the majority of handicrafts for sale (such as rattan place mats, carved wooden hornbill ashtrays, large carved doors, windows, chairs, tables and large anthropomorphic figures) are not made on that basis and are, instead, produced on consignment for Kuching handicraft shops by longhouse residents who supplement their income from cash cropping by making handicrafts (Berma 2000). In one example, at the town of Betong (near the Skrang River), I visited a small Iban textile factory in which around six local women worked producing *pua kumbu* on traditional back strap looms for the Kuching handicraft market. Moreover, tourist longhouse communities produce their own handicrafts for sale directly to tourists, although usually they are mixed with other store-bought items marked up for resale to tourists (see Chapter Six). A great many items are also produced in factories or rural communities in Indonesia. In particular, Balinese and Sumatran-made handicrafts are now common (pers.comm.Heidi Munan, Vernon Kedit, Anna Edmundson, Edric Ong and Reminda Kato). Despite this, many of the handicrafts for sale in Kuching, particularly the larger carvings, are wonderful examples of skilled craftsmanship, regardless of any categorisation that might see them defined as 'authentic', 'traditional' or, alternatively, 'tourist art' and 'fake'. The point I wish to stress here is that much of the 'tribal' material for sale in Kuching's galleries and handicraft shops is mass-produced solely for tourism and, as such, is not representative of everyday domestic material culture in Sarawak longhouse communities. The average Iban longhouse is not adorned with, or fashioned out of, elaborately carved wooden fixtures and furniture like that found in the shops along Jalan Main Bazaar in Kuching. The works of Graburn (1976) and, more recently, Hitchcock and Teague (2000), on the social, economic and political aspects of souvenirs and ethnic and tourist arts, provide an excellent introduction to this field of anthropology.

Figure 17: Left, front cover Borneo Interworld sightseeing brochure. Right, front cover Borneo Interworld longhouse tour brochure.

The brochures produced by local longhouse tour companies communicate the message most explicitly. The Borneo Interworld tour brochure covers in Figure 17 (previous page) are relevant examples. The left hand image is the cover of the company's all-inclusive brochure, which markets city tours, longhouse tours, wildlife tours and other tourist activities. The right hand image is the company's brochure specifically for longhouse tours.

In the left hand image the Iban man is shown bare-chested, allowing us to view his tattoos. He is also wearing a 'traditional' headdress (or war bonnet) and necklace. The large rooster in the centre is a signifier for the local sport of cock fighting and, perhaps, a rural lifestyle. Although traditional headdresses and necklaces like the one shown are

now rare in contemporary Sarawak (King 1993b:272), in the interests of marketing the 'Borneo experience' the image has been fabricated and presented in full colour, so as to depict a state of unchanged pre-modern 'native' life. The image contains no signs of modernity, such as machine-made clothing or a wristwatch, but instead presents a stereotypical 'native' in traditional attire. (Furthermore, as Sontag has suggested, the brochure skilfully employs the depersonalising and narcissistic qualities of the photographic image to appeal to Western traditions of representing the 'other').

Inside the brochure the description of the tour plays upon the same imagery and paints a picture of idyllic jungle life. For example, under the heading 'Iban Longhouse expedition (2 days/1 night)' the brochure offers the following:

> This trip will offer you a deeper experience of the jungle and its inhabitants, taking you further away from the hustle and bustle of modern day 'civilisation'...A jungle walk, allowing you to get a close feel of the forest will be organised after lunch. After reaching the upriver Longhouse, dinner 'Iban Style' will be served, followed by an evening of merry making with your fun loving Iban hosts. The night will be spent inside the Longhouse where feelings of remoteness and of harmony with nature will certainly come to you. The next day you will return to Kuching after breakfast...This adventure is accessible to all, requiring no special skills other than the willingness to discover a truly unique people and its astonishing culture, and do not wory, your head will be safe!

The brochure illustrates the contradictions involved in marketing that sells a material longhouse tour product in the present but that relies on evoking and constructing an idea of the primitive past. The process poses some strange contradictions. The brochure presents an image evoking a sense of the exotic and the primitive. This is further developed by the text, which refers to Bornean rivers as mysterious byways leading into the unknown (a view refined and stylised by Conrad), by remarking that 'a deeper experience of the jungle and its inhabitants' awaits the tourist, and by concluding with the phrase 'do not worry, your head will be safe', reminding tourists that they will be staying with 'natives' who are known to have decapitated their enemies. However, the adventure into the interior takes place within an easy day's travel from Kuching, accessible to all. The brochure creates a strategic balance between promoting a tour product that evokes wild Borneo and promises to provide access to it, and assuring tourists that their comfort and welfare will not be compromised. The strategy is again a purposeful blurring of past and present and fake and hybrid Iban culture. Further, as Zeppel has identified in her analysis of similar material, the brochure suggests that the

visitor will enjoy a degree of meaningful social interaction with the longhouse residents, with 'an evening of merry making with your fun loving Iban hosts' (Zeppel 1994:132). In the right hand image in Figure 17, the tourist is again invited to gaze at a picture of unchanged nature and culture. The Iban man serves the same symbolic purpose as in the previous brochure. However, a few additional props have been added, including a canoe and an Iban woman.[41]

Figure 18 below is taken from the Borneo Fairyland Tour Company's brochure and demonstrates the replication of imagery and content that is characteristic of marketing for the longhouse tour and Sarawak travel industry. On the left can be seen the man and woman from the previous brochure (Figure 17), as well as two other images, one showing skulls labelled, 'human skulls', and the other of an Iban man shooting a blowpipe labelled, 'blowpipe hunting'.[42] The text accompanying the images advises the reader that 'the natives' will provide entertainment in the form of traditional dances, will hold a jungle feast and will provide a range of native 'handicrafts' for the 'keen shopper'. The brochure demonstrates close continuity with the itinerary of early longhouse tourists such as Graham, discussed in Chapter Four.

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[41] The particular man and woman in this photo appear in the same or a similar pose in a number of brochures for different companies. Once again, this man is a resident of the tourist longhouse Murat on the Skrang River.

[42] The 'blowpipe hunter' is Tuai Rumah Bansing from Murat longhouse who, because of his tattoos and Murat's long involvement with tourism, features in a number of promotional products of the Sarawak travel industry including STB's film 'Hornbill Pioneers', which is discussed later in this chapter.

foliage. Soon you will arrive at the Longhouse and given a warm welcome by the dwellers and witness the colourful traditional dance. Feel free to join the natives in their daily chores such as making baskets, mats, fishing nets, feeding their livestock, washing clothes and joining them for a swim in the river. In the evening after being entertained to a jungle feast (dinner), you can shop for native handicrafts or join the native in their traditional dances before retiring for the night.

TOUR NO. 15

SKRANG/LEMANAK RIVER IBAN LONGHOUSE (3 Days/2 Nights)

Day 1

Itinerary as in Skrang/Lemanak

Day 2

After breakfast in the first longhouse, proceed by longboat going upstream negotiating more rapids and tricky bends of the Lemanak River. When water level is low, you are welcome to join in the excitement of pushing and pulling the boat against rapids. At intervals making a stop to collect jungle produce and fishing along the river bank. After lunch, proceed on foot for about half an hour's walk to arrive at a longhouse. Dinner will be served at the home of the Headman. In the evening, mingle with the native, and observe the ways of life of the Longhouse dwellers before retiring for night.

Day 3

After breakfast, making the return journey by longboat downstream to arrive at the Jetty, then by coach to Kuching late in the afternoon.

Blow Pipe Hunting

Day 2

After breakfast, witness blow-pipe demontration and a jungle walk before returning by boat, then by coach with lunch enroute before arriving at Kuching.

Figure 18: Images from Borneo Fairyland longhouse tour brochure.

Despite the fact that this brochure is produced by a different tour company it is, in fact, advertising tours to the same longhouse as that used by the tour company in the previous example (Figure 17). The competing companies use the same tourist longhouse and have the same program of tourist activities.[43] Essentially, both companies are selling the same product and they use the same, or a similar, set of visual signifiers and simple textual descriptions to evoke key themes in the tradition of wild Borneo. Furthermore, in each company's brochures, the tourists are reassured that they will only ever be a day's trip away from civilisation.

Figure 19 (following page) is the front page of a brochure produced by CPH Travel Agencies of Sarawak (CPH) which (in addition to being the oldest established longhouse tour company in Sarawak) operates tours to Bunu longhouse. Bunu longhouse was the first designed-for-tourism longhouse on the Skrang River and the

[43] The nature of the commercial relationship permitting this arrangement is discussed in later chapters.

first longhouse with 'hotel style' accommodation. This brochure is designed to provide information to tourists already booked on a longhouse tour through a package tour connection and to market tours to 'walk in' customers at the company's shop front in Kuching.

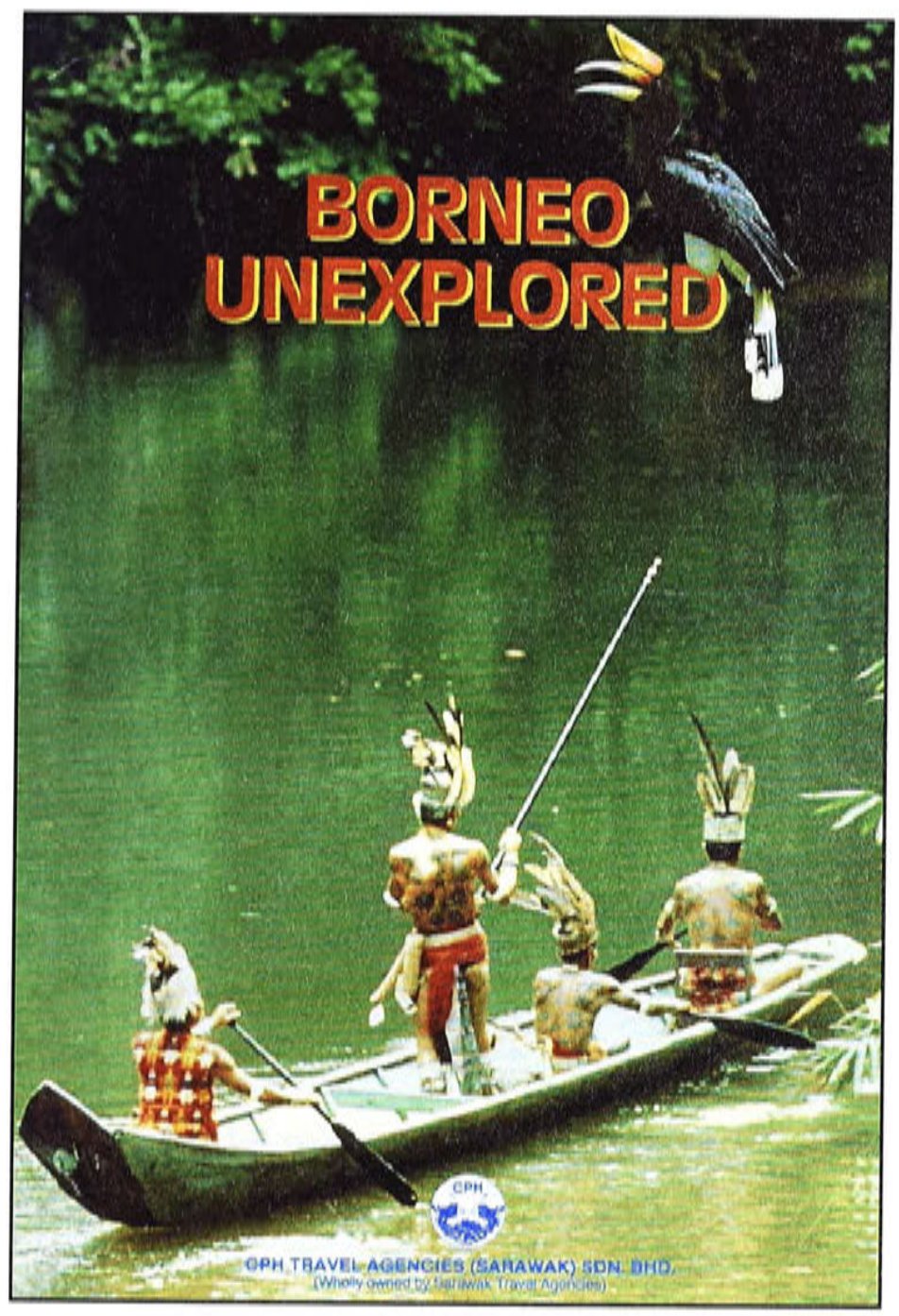

Figure 19: Front Cover of CPH Travel Agencies (Sarawak) longhouse tour brochure.

The brochure creates an image of an unchanged 'traditional' Borneo, a Borneo where 'exploration' of the interior is still possible. Every element of the composition in the frame is constructed to create this impression, including the activity being portrayed in the image, which is a hunting party heading down river, with a hunter or warrior with a blowpipe. In this sense, it is an extreme example because the only context in which the activity captured by the camera occurs in present-day Sarawak in the way that the actors are shown is as part of a staged, tourism-related event. In addition, the longboat is shown without an outboard motor, even though it has a special outboard fitting at the back, and the men in the boat are not wearing everyday clothes but are dressed up in

'traditional costume', in a loincloth and headdress, and in one case, a ceremonial jacket. Furthermore, the men have numerous 'traditional tattoos' and the clothing they are wearing enables their tattoos to be displayed for capture by the camera. They carry only blowpipes for their hunting expedition, even though blowpipes have been superseded by the use of shotguns for several decades.[44] The image is a carefully crafted scene that depicts colourfully dressed 'natives' hunting on an idyllic river. Because the subjects are shown with their backs to the camera and occupied with 'hunting', rather than facing or engaging the viewer, the impression is that the photograph is a moment fortuitously captured on film as in an image from a documentary, instead of, as is the case, a staged view for tourist promotion. This type of photographic staging is remarkably similar to the images of Stamang residents used as illustrations in the Malmo Museum catalogue discussed in Chapter Four. Furthermore, the headdresses and the focus on the bare, tattooed bodies of the men evokes the tradition of the noble savage.

The photographs in tour brochures as well as similar images in books or in film and television are often presented in a way that leaves them open to interpretation as a kind of pseudo ethnographic evidence. For example, with longhouse tour brochures, images are provided so that they may be interpreted as 'slices' of the everyday life of the Iban and of what the potential tourist might expect to see on the tour. In this mode, like the literary vision and photographic illustrations of the Iban which Andro Linklater was sent to retrieve for the aborted 'Wild People' publication by Time-Life Books, the Iban's remoteness from the rest of the world is emphasised and, like labelling in an ethnographic museum, fragments of information about their customs and lifestyle are included. For example, as the Intrepid brochure discussed earlier (Figure 14) states, 'they live in longhouses which may be home to thirty or more families'. As Price (1989) commenting on ethnographic exhibits has noted, 'In this mode of presentation

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[44] In my observation, the tattoos that can be seen covering the men pictured in Figure 19 are not common among younger Iban men. As noted previously, while tattooing remains popular in longhouse communities, the older-style of tattooing in which men would often cover much of their body and which formed part of rites of passage (as well as having various other important social and symbolic functions depending on the tattoo) has given way to more discreet designs that are less 'traditional' both in design and purpose (Freeman 1992:221-223; King 1993b:255-256,272). For example, the 'modern' style includes tattoos of the name of a loved one or of a naked woman. As a consequence, it is mainly older male members of the longhouse who have the type of tattoos that can be seen in Figure 19. It is notable that the men who are chosen to represent the Iban in tour brochure photographs are always older men.

...an emphasis on the objects' [or subjects'] cultural distance replaces the focus on its place within a documentable historical framework' (Price 1989:83).

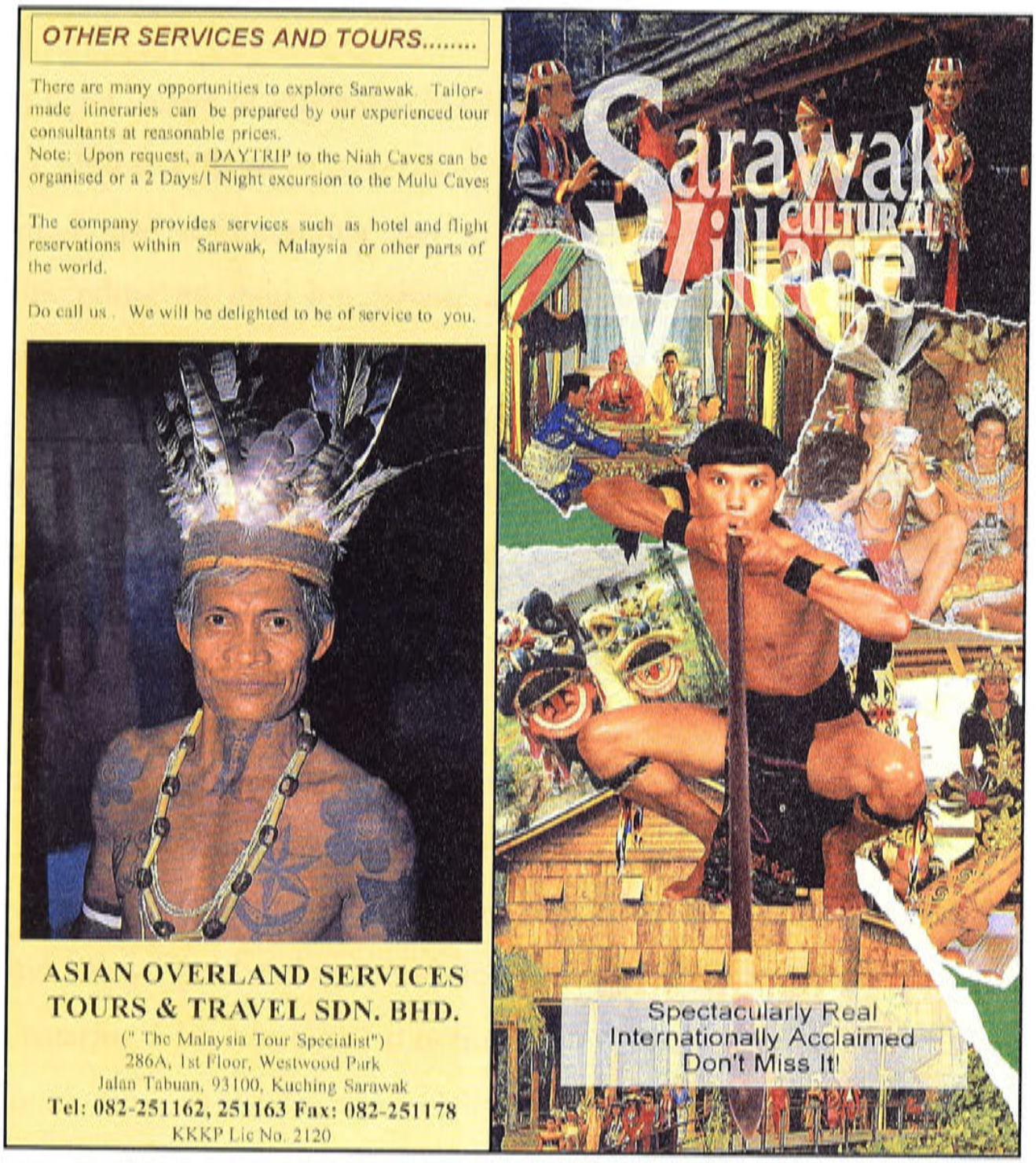

Figure 20: Left, back page of Asian Overland Services Brochure. Right, front Cover of Sarawak Cultural Village Brochure.

The left hand image in Figure 20 (above) demonstrates that the pictures used by AOS to market its tours to Stamang longhouse were in a similar style and format to the examples already discussed. The strategy of the brochure is to reinforce (or create) a conventional image of 'traditional' Iban life and wild Borneo. The subject (who was a resident of Stamang longhouse) has an abundance of traditional tattoos that indicate his foreignness and the fascination of his body as a tourist attraction, and the headdress and necklace (which are not part of everyday longhouse costume) accentuate the message. Furthermore, while the image shows the subject smiling engagingly, the apparent realism of the portrait suggests that he is offered as photographic or ethnographic evidence of the authentic scenes of Iban life the viewer will see on the tour. The

brochure provides no content to suggest that longhouse residents may live (and appear) in any other way than as exotic indigenous peoples within the tradition of wild Borneo.

The right hand image in Figure 20 is taken from the front cover of the brochure for the Sarawak Cultural Village. The brochure's intention is not to market longhouse tours to tourist longhouse communities, but to promote tours to the specially built, replica houses (including an Iban longhouse) at the Sarawak Cultural Village. Because the Sarawak Cultural Village includes houses that display a range of ethnic groups, including Iban, Malay and Chinese, the front cover image is designed as a collage representing a number of groups. Also shown are tourist activities that the village offers, such as the tourist couple pictured dressed in Iban 'costume' who are drinking *tuak* as part of a 'headhunter wedding'.[45]

With each image in the collage, the signs employed to indicate each group's 'culture' are what could be termed traditional-historical. The Malays are shown wearing *songkit* (a Malay textile); the Kayan women on the right are wearing hand-made hats and jackets and shown performing a traditional dance; and the Punan man in the centre is depicted wearing a loincloth and shooting a blowpipe. The issue in this case is not one of false marketing, as the Sarawak Cultural Village is a museum-style theme park and the images on the cover are essentially an accurate representation of the product and what the visitor will see. Nevertheless, what is curious about the cover image - and a reflection of the general predicament facing the Sarawak and longhouse tour industry - is that the brochure includes the message 'spectacularly real'. Does this phrase suggest that the actors shown on the cover of the brochure, and the replica houses at the village, are a 'spectacularly real' representation of the way Sarawak's indigenous people lived in the past? Or is the statement suggesting that the Village is a real demonstration of how Sarawak's people live today? The message is not clear and the ambiguity is arguably intentional. Certainly, if what is communicated by the marketing media is to

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[45]Similar to some longhouse tour companies (including AOS at Stamang), the Sarawak Cultural Village offers 'headhunter weddings' to honeymoon couples. This activity involves 'dressing up' in Iban 'costume', and celebrating the wedding with a staged 'offering' and a party organised with locals and other guests from the hotel in which the couple are staying, or with other members of the package tour that the couple are on.

be believed, it would seem that there is minimal difference between the 'living museum' product that is the Sarawak Cultural Village and the 'rarely visited by Westerners' and 'unexplored' product that a tour to a longhouse community on the Skrang or Engkari Rivers provides.[46]

Ambiguity is pivotal to the Sarawak travel industry because it allows for fluidity in the way that travel products are promoted and explained to tourists and how they interpret and understand them. This is partially a reflection of the contradictory nature of traditions such as wild Borneo, which are continuations of long-established conventions of knowledge and transformed by contemporary experience. For example, as discussed in Chapter Seven, the greeting of tourists at the longhouse by residents wearing feathered headdresses (as is the case at Stamang) may be explained by the longhouse tour company as a 'show' or demonstration of traditional culture while, on other occasions, it may be touted as an 'authentic', current tradition - a 'real' moment of 'wild Borneo'. Nevertheless, whether the product is a 'spectacularly real' or a 'spectacularly unreal' longhouse experience, it is more or less constant as a reiteration of wild Borneo. In the marketing material, longhouse people are always shown in 'traditional' costume, engaged in timeless activities, such as paddling a boat or hunting, and longhouses are always wooden and dilapidated. The persistence of images such as this in the travel brochures is remarkable, with the effect that the longhouse tour and Sarawak travel industry consistently reaffirms the legendary, exotic historicity of Sarawak and Borneo. Tour operators in Kuching and other promotional agencies such as the STB repeat themes and images relentlessly in order to market longhouse tours within Borneo's established market presence. For example, Zeppel's study reveals that wild Borneo imagery dominates in postcards depicting the Iban and Sarawak (Zeppel 1994:95). One of the more extravagant examples of this style of marketing I encountered was a 10-foot high, painted styrofoam Iban warrior in the lobby of the Kuching Hilton, complete with technicolour cardboard shield and a blowpipe.

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[46] 'Living Museum' is used as the village's slogan in much of its advertising.

The Sarawak Tourism Board perspective

Since its inception the STB has vigorously pursued the promotion of Sarawak as a tourist destination, drawing predominantly on the 'Culture · Adventure · Nature' theme recommended by the Masterplan and making use of well-known tourism markers such as Borneo, headhunters, longhouses and orang-utans. In particular, as recommended by the Masterplan, the STB has promoted Sarawak's longhouse culture and assisted with organised longhouse tours. To this extent, it has certainly fulfilled the role that the Masterplan intended, especially as its marketing complements Sarawak tourism products and services, including the longhouse tour industry. However, if, as is arguably the case, the STB, as the primary government tourism agency, has a role in identifying new ways of marketing Sarawak as a tourist destination, including new ways of seeing the products that are being offered, the STB has failed. Its marketing material differs little from that of the in-bound and out-bound tour operators. Furthermore, in the following interviews with two senior Sarawak Government figures associated with the STB, Mr Robert De Silva and Mr Charles Jimbai, both men show little interest in considering alternative forms of longhouse tourism than those currently in place and neither is capable of describing the tourist product in more than ambiguous and contradictory language.

Mr De Silva responded at length when I asked him to outline the STB's marketing strategy for Sarawak, including longhouse tours:

> **De Silva**. I think now that there is this tourism board in creation we are trying to reposition how Sarawak is sold because in the past there was a tendency of selling Sarawak as, at least the indigenous tribes in Sarawak, as primitive in the sense of having photos of people with loincloths, rowing boats with no engines and trying to appeal to the imaginations of the Europeans mainly by having them feel as if they were going back to some pristine time, like you could find in novels and in the books. Now we are trying to sell Sarawak not just on its indigenous people to be visited, but mainly on the jungles, the adventure possibilities, the nature the national parks and so on.
>
> Of course the longhouse element will still be one of the strongest selling points but in our literature and in our videos and so on, although we still play on the theme of what tradition is, on what the culture is, we try to portray it in a way that people will really see it. Of course if you go on a package tour to a longhouse you will still see people with the feathers and loincloths but they will be dancing and performing. We try to explain that now Sarawak is modern that the people are entering into the modern age yet they retain their traditions and culture in some way and they have it available for the tourists to see. So when the tourists come into Sarawak they will see part of that culture but we tell them that the advantage of Sarawak being modern and not

> being a primitive place is that they can have a much better interaction with the people because the people won't see them as some kind of aliens coming from outer-space. They have seen Europeans on TV, they have seen Europeans on the streets of Kuching. When they [tourists] come for shopping in Kuching they won't feel bad in those places because they will not be faced with starving stone-aged people with kids with disease. People in the longhouse are pretty healthy, many of them are pretty wealthy.

Mr De Silva's rambling commentary acknowledges that it is standard practice in the Sarawak tourism industry to market Sarawak using familiar clichéd imagery that appeals to the imagination of European visitors. Nevertheless, he presents the STB's current approach as both more complex and multifaceted than previous marketing and less reliant on the 'primitive' theme. However, his comment echoes the views of longhouse tour operators (discussed in Chapter Seven) in that his description of longhouse tours is based on familiar stereotypes such as 'the feathers and loincloths'. While he is correct in his assertion that the STB's promotion of Sarawak has taken a broader marketing approach and encouraged an improvement in the standard of promotional material, notably its graphic design, it is also true that the STB continues to promote an ambiguous and deceptive view of Sarawak longhouse life. As the examples of STB travel marketing discussed below demonstrate, the content of its marketing allows a range of interpretations and suggest that longhouse people are still remote, exotic and primitive.

For example, Figure 21 below is the main illustration of an Iban longhouse in a 1996 STB brochure (STB 1996b). On the same page as the illustration the text provides comment on development and modernisation in longhouse communities, as well as cultural continuity, adaptation and change in Sarawak.[47] The choice of image is crucial as the caption reads 'Iban longhouse' and the reader is encouraged to interpret the image as a typical contemporary Iban longhouse, which it is not. In fact, the longhouse depicted is either an historical image or a rare example of a surviving older longhouse structure belonging to an extremely impoverished community.[48]

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[47] The relevant text on the Brochure page reads, 'Although many of the 5,000 or so longhouses in Sarawak have gone modern, quite a number are still traditionally built and well preserved, some even having kept the head trophies collected in the long gone days of head-hunting. However, visitors should not expect to find impoverished primitives with no idea of the outside world, or well trained 'performers' putting on a show for tourists...In Sarawak, culture is a living, dynamic process. For all its history, Sarawak culture was subjected to outside influences, continually evolving and adapting to new times and realities, adding new elements to traditions, enriching itself in the process' (STB 1996b).

[48] Indeed, when viewed through the lens of development the marketing becomes a picture of underdeveloped, backward and poor communities. I believe that much of the Sarawak and longhouse tour marketing discussed in this

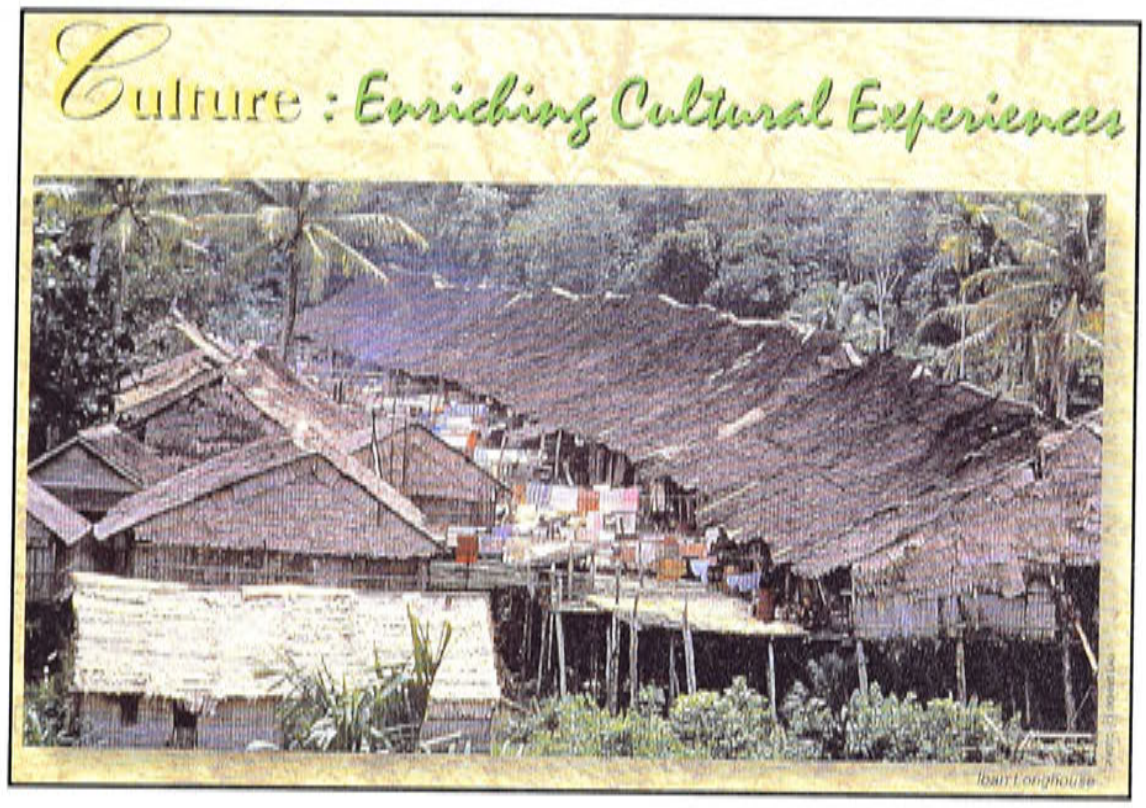

Figure 21:Illustration of 'Iban longhouse' from 1996 STB travel brochure 'Culture • Adventure • Nature - Sarawak Malaysia, The Best of Borneo'.

Mr De Silva's explanation of the STB's marketing strategy in relation to the 'longhouse culture' content demonstrates a similar ambiguity to the brochure, especially his statements that it 'plays on the theme of what tradition is' and shows longhouses 'the way people really see it. What this actually means is not clear, especially when juxtaposed with his statement that 'you will still see people with the feathers and loincloths but they will be dancing and performing'. It is uncertain whether the performances are a 'theatre of traditional culture', provided for tourism, or whether they are displays of everyday Iban longhouse culture packaged for tourist purposes.

Mr De Silva seems to assume that tourists are capable of distinguishing between those aspects of Iban culture that are part of the commercial theatre of longhouse tourism and those that are a normal part of contemporary longhouse life. But, in my view, many

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thesis relies on the fact that many foreign tourists expect (either implicitly or explicitly) a level of backwardness in the living standard of longhouse communities and Malaysians generally. The fact that this encourages the promotion of the poorer peoples of Malaysia is not considered. This stands in stark contrast to the views of Malaysians and of the different ethnic groups of Sarawak, because each group's (or for that matter each individual longhouse community's or *bilik*-family's) relative poverty is a sensitive issue and not necessarily something viewed as suitable for display to tourists and in tourist marketing. Kedit's *Tourism Report* (1980b) provides some insight into Iban perceptions of wealth and status in relation to Skrang River tourist longhouse communities in 1975. Kedit notes, 'There was another longhouse that was often frequented by tourists who wish [sic] to "get away from civilisation", and who did not wish to stay at "commercialised longhouses" - this longhouse is at Panchor. To the Europeans, it seemed that this longhouse and the Iban staying there were more "natural". But to the Iban from the longhouses downriver from Panchor, the Iban there [at Panchor] were spoken of with contempt: because of their poverty; unhygienic manner; their inability to get much harvests [sic]; and their shameless behaviour towards visitors – all seemingly would portray a wrong image of the Iban. As a matter of fact, one *Tuai Rumah* expressed distress that tourists preferred to visit Panchor than other "better" longhouses (Kedit 1980b:9)'.

tourists struggle to accurately make these distinctions.[49] In fact, in my observation, many tourists to longhouses believe that the images of longhouse life in the tour brochures are an indication of contemporary Iban longhouse life. Therefore, as happened on occasion, when tourists were confronted with a longhouse community, or aspects of it, that they felt did not match the marketing for the tour they had been sold, they were disappointed and commented that they had been 'cheated' or 'ripped off'.

Further evidence about how the STB and the top of the Sarawak and longhouse tour marketing hierarchy understood longhouse tours was provided by the making of the promotional video *Sarawak Five Star Adventure* (STB 1996c), which was produced for the STB under the direction of Mr De Silva.

The film was produced to showcase the tourism potential of Sarawak at tourism trade fairs and to overseas out-bound tour companies around the world. It contains a section promoting longhouse tours and includes several scenes with Mr De Silva posing as a tourist on a longhouse tour. The viewer is not advised of Mr De Silva's position with the STB. In one scene he is pictured in the *ruai* of a longhouse dancing in a feathered headdress or war bonnet, while Iban in traditional costume seated close by applaud his performance. The longhouse featured is Murat Longhouse on the Skrang River, which as noted previously, had been receiving tour groups since 1963. However, the film sequence is put together in such a way that it appears that Mr De Silva (in his role as tourist) is being celebrated as a visitor by a remote community living peacefully in the Sarawak jungle, removed from modernity and development.

On the day that filming was completed for the section of the film that featured Murat, I met Mr De Silva at the jetty at Pias, which is the departure point for longboats travelling to Murat. He was on his way back from the longhouse and I was waiting for a boat to take me there. We discussed his choice of longhouse for the film. I suggested to Mr De Silva that, if the STB had wanted to promote an image of the 'real' Sarawak that did not cling to 'selling Sarawak as primitive', as he had suggested when I interviewed him, it

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[49] It is also worth noting that there are differences of opinion amongst longhouse residents about how some aspects of Iban culture and longhouse life that are featured on longhouse tours should be interpreted.

would have been better to film a more typical contemporary Iban longhouse in the modern style, rather than a tourist longhouse such as Murat which the residents had renovated in a 'traditional style' in order to retain trade from tourism in partnership with Kuching tour operators. Mr De Silva responded simply, 'they're used to being filmed at Murat; they know what to do'. It seems to me that what he meant by that comment was that not only were the residents of Murat experienced at performing in front of video cameras, but that, more importantly, they were skilled at performing the fabricated image of Iban culture promoted by longhouse tourism. In the communities I visited that were not involved with longhouse tourism, many of the younger residents with whom I spoke said that they did not know how to do dancing of the kind featured in Mr De Silva's film and provided on longhouse tours.

Another perspective on the market image and format of longhouse tours was provided by the comments of Mr Jimbai, a senior Sarawak Government figure involved with the STB. In the 1990s Mr Jimbai had considerable personal involvement in directing the STB's promotional strategies. In the following extract from an interview I conducted with Mr Jimbai his views on the nature of the product being sold and the strategies used to market Sarawak and longhouse tours demonstrate similar ambiguity to those of Mr De Silva. However, in my opinion, he suggests to an even greater degree than Mr De Silva that the Iban culture featured in tourism marketing and in longhouse tours is an accurate version of contemporary longhouse life.

> **Jimbai** On the selling of the cultural aspect which you are interested in we try to sell Sarawak that has a diversity of culture...In diversification of culture Sarawak has it. At the moment we do not open to the whole 27 groups because we can't afford to do that at the moment, so we have concentration basically on two societies, Bidayuh and the Iban.[50] The Iban seem to have the most focus, it appears. First of all I think it is personally this... The Iban are more forward, you know they will go to you and say "how are you" they don't care who you are, new or old, they will go direct to you. Because of that there is that warmth created and when we promote the Iban overseas we promote the Iban who has a very deep streak of culture. So you may see in the posters of them, during the ceremonies and so forth And you I am sure have seen that when they [tourists] go to the longhouse they will receive them along that line, they will dress up and receive the tourists and dance the *miring* and so on.[51]
>
> **Kruse** Not on the Skrang they don't.

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[50] Mr Jimbai is referring here to the numerous different ethnic groups in Sarawak. The three main groups are Iban, Chinese and Malay. However, as noted Chapter One, there are a number of much smaller non-Muslim (non-Malay) groups in Sarawak, including Bidayuh, Kenyah, Kelabit, Kayan, Punan, Penan etc (King 1993b:39).
[51] A *miring* is a ritual offering. See Chapter Six and glossary for further detail.

Jimbai OK, whatever, but in some areas like Batang Ai they do. Now those things are still happening, if I go to longhouse they still receive me in the dress and so on. That is the culture regardless of who you are they will come up and do that. So we present overseas the people who are still deep in their cultural belief. When they come here some tourists will be able to see that, certainly they will see the longhouse. In terms of longhouse we will try to maintain in some areas to keep that traditional style of longhouse. In Batang Ai, I think Supaya, they still have a very traditional longhouse, Stamang, I don't know Stamang. When I go up there I tell them, "maintain this style, perhaps the structure, maintain the sense". The materials we use may vary and change but the style - maintain the traditional style of the longhouse. I think the Iban are aware that if they keep that the tourists will still come and it will make money for them. I haven't been to Skrang for quite a while, most of my time I spend in Batang Ai andI know the people, for instance, in [Gunggu] and [Bayang] and [Kudi] before the dam was built.[52] One, they were very innocent, two, poverty wise - very bad. Now I come back again there seems to be a change in their lifestyle, they seem to be better off and I find that they have become more culture conscious.

Kruse It's true especially with the *ngajat* (dancing).

Jimbai Before they don't do it, they don't do weaving in [Bayang], they don't do*ngajat*, the young girls couldn't care less. To them this was something in the past, they say "why should I? I want to be modern therefore I must do something modern. I must know how to do Western dance, whatever, the Malay dance, whatever". That would associate them with modernisation. But now they do exactly that but they do come back and I have seen these young girls start to dance now and weaving baskets.

So our advertisement is along that line, that you go to Sarawak - people of diverse culture, you go to the longhouse, you see what the longhouse is really like and you go see the Iban who are still kept close to traditional. So that is the advertisement. You aware that some of these *Tuai Rumah* have been to Europe? Rentap has gone to Europe. I think he is nice man and I think he knows that as long as they keep their culture and their tradition tourists come and they will have money.

Mr Jimbai begins his discussion by explaining that the marketing strategy for Sarawak is to promote its diverse culture and, in particular, the Iban. He comments on how the STB promotes the Iban (and, primarily, longhouse tours) overseas, noting that it is those Iban who 'have a very deep streak of culture' on whom the marketing is focussed. What Mr Jimbai means by a 'deep streak of culture' proves to be what he sees as characteristic Iban warmth and hospitality and traditional ceremonies, although his comments seem to indicate that he means ceremonies and dance of the kind used to promote Sarawak. His meaning is clearer when he explains that when tourists go on a longhouse tour residents 'dress up' and 'dance, the *miring* and so on'. Mr Jimbai's claims are even more strangely inaccurate than Mr De Silva's as Mr Jimbai asserts that the aspects of Iban culture promoted by the STB are commonplace aspects of contemporary Iban longhouse life, as, for example, in his remark that Iban people still receive visitors in 'dress and so on' 'regardless of who you are'. While this sort of

courtesy may be extended to a visiting government Minister, in my experience it is unlikely to occur for ordinary visitors (including Western tourists). Even in the majority of tourist longhouses welcoming ceremonies (with or without costume) were not common (although they were part of the program in Stamang) and were usually only performed for a fee when requested by a tour company for a particularly large tour group. In fact, the only occasion on which I witnessed a welcoming ceremony in a non-tourist longhouse was when I accompanied Mr Jimbai to a longhouse to bring on-line a new diesel generator that had been purchased with a government grant, something recognised as a special event worthy of celebration.

As with Mr De Silva, there are close parallels between Mr Jimbai's views on Iban longhouse culture and the misleading stereotypes used in tourism marketing for Sarawak. Furthermore, the commentary of both men focuses on the need to promote a product that can be performed by longhouse residents to meet the requirements of the marketing and to the satisfaction of tourists who are primed to expect that kind of culture from the marketing. This is the same kind of circuitous reasoning that is evident in the Masterplan.

While Mr Jimbai suggests that the Iban his agency promotes overseas are those 'still deep in their cultural belief' he contradicts this view by referring to discussions he has had with residents of tourist longhouses he advised about how to maintain the style of their longhouse in an appropriate 'traditional' fashion for tourism. He suggests that before tourism in Bayang processes of 'modernisation' meant that young girls 'couldn't care less' about traditional forms of Iban dance or weaving because they saw them as things of the past but that tourism had inspired them to relearn these 'traditional' activities.[53] In other words, he infers that tour operators and others in the Sarawak tourism industry proactively contribute to keeping Iban longhouse 'deep culture' continuing in the modern world. It seems that Mr Jimbai sees tourism as an instrument for revitalising or preserving Iban traditional culture and he goes on to remark: 'they [the Iban] seem to be better off and have become more culture conscious'. This parallels a theme in anthropological literature (for example, McKean (1978), Graburn

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[52] Mr Jimbai is referring to three tourist longhouses in the area near the Batang Ai Hydro Electricity Dam.

(1983), Crick (1994), Boissevain (1996) and Picard (1996)) that cultural tourism can act to 'preserve' or 'maintain' certain aspects of 'traditional' or past culture, by establishing a contemporary economic and social context for it that might not otherwise exist. In the case of longhouse tourism in my experience, this argument has some merit, but, as this thesis demonstrates, the process of Iban cultural continuity and change is more complicated than Mr Jimbai suggests using the limited examples of people learning dance and weaving.

Mr Jimbai observes that the Iban 'are aware' that if they maintain 'traditional' culture, (including maintaining their longhouses in a particular style and remaining skilled at certain cultural practices such as traditional dance) the tour industry will continue to bring tourists to longhouses and longhouse communities will profit. Mr Jimbai also claims that 'traditional culture' is the only culture that sells and the only way that longhouse residents can profit from longhouse tourism. While there is a strict sense in which this is true, as the narratives in Chapter Seven will show, it is a characteristic limitation of the industry that Mr Jimbai omits to consider whether the tours sell at the expense of the development of an alternative longhouse tourism product which would give a more up-to-date insight into longhouse life and allow for a wider range of 'modern' longhouse communities to be involved with tourism.

My recollection of the tone of Mr Jimbai's comments is that he was not opposed to development amongst Iban people, including modernisation and cultural change that may involve incorporating elements of 'Western culture'. But he believed that 'modernised' Iban culture should not play a role in the STB's marketing or be encouraged as an obvious attribute of the longhouse communities involved with commercial tourism. This view is strikingly similar to Denis Hon's (1989) vision for the future of Sarawak longhouse tourism (discussed in Chapter Three) which was that, if longhouse communities could not be found to provide the version of Sarawak culture that tourists want, it could be provided in 'well planned parks and cultural villages' (Hon 1989:287). The theme park 'Sarawak Cultural Village' now exists and provides exactly the product that Hon described (it was planned at the time Hon's paper was

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[53] Bayang is a tourist longhouse on the Batang Ai River.

published). Mr Jimbai's comments would seem to support the production of theme park products on a small-scale by the longhouse communities servicing longhouse tours.

Mr Jimbai's statements in the final paragraph of the quotation encapsulate the contradictory nature of the views on Iban culture used to promote Sarawak and longhouse tours. He comments that STB's advertisements are 'along that line', referring to the vision of 'deep culture, and claims that tourists who go on a longhouse tour will see what longhouse life is 'really like', including Iban 'who are still kept close to traditional'. In the last section he refers to Pengulu Rentap from Stamang and he comments, 'as long they [the Stamang community] keep their tradition, tourists will come and they will have money'. His comments suggest that the way longhouse tours are currently promoted and operated is prescriptive and should not be challenged or changed, such that if longhouse communities want to keep profiting from tourism they should remain within the current promotional paradigm set by organisations such as the STB.

A final example of marketing for Sarawak and longhouse tours is provided by the STB web site, which describes journeying to a longhouse and the welcome the traveller will receive. The STB web site offers general information on Sarawak, local tourist attractions, tourist infrastructure and facilities.[54] The site offers a 'virtual travel mart' with links to web sites for hotels, longhouse tour companies and other travel-related businesses. It provides the following vignette of longhouse life and what would be experienced on a longhouse tour:

> The longhouse is the very centre of communal life in Sarawak. To visit a longhouse is to look deep into the State's soul.
>
> As most traditional longhouses are riverside dwellings, the real longhouse experience begins with the journey upriver. River travel in a perahu - a shallow draught canoe - affords you the pleasure of seeing Sarawak at its best; your boatman will take you along idyllic waterways with white pebble beaches, under the over-arching branches of tropical hardwoods, whose dense emerald foliage allows through only a dappling of sunlight. As you meander upstream, and your boatman punts through the river's shallows, kingfishers glide past, hornbills fly overhead, and local children dive from the riverbank into the cooling waters.

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[54] The site was last updated in 2001. The current address for the web site is www.sarawaktourism.com.

> As you arrive at the longhouse, it is customary to be greeted by the longhouse maidens and young men performing traditional dances and playing ceremonial gongs. From the moment you step inside the longhouse you will be treated as an honoured guest. Visitors will be offered a glass of tuak - the very palatable local rice wine. Or more often than not, several glasses of tuak will be offered to wash down a banquet of local delicacies. Then your hosts will start beating the gongs. This is the cue for the traditional dance, usually the ngajat. The inspiration for the graceful movements of the dancers comes from the effortless flight of the hornbill, Sarawak's emblem. Then your newfound friends will enthral you with stories of Sarawak's legendary past. Usually a longhouse party lasts all night. As the sun is eclipsed by the moon, weary from your day's travel, and a night of dancing and feasting, retire to the ruai- a covered veranda - for a good night's sleep.
>
> There are many travel agents that offer longhouse tours and overnight stays. Ask around for the itinerary that best suits you.

In contrast to the previous examples discussed in this chapter the author has had greater space and licence to create a modern literary vision of Borneo and longhouse life. The passage reads like a fantasy, where after an 'idyllic' trip 'upriver' through 'dense emerald foliage', 'longhouse maidens' greet weary 'honoured guests' who are entertained with stories, dance and wine. The writing is in a line of descent from the historical literary versions of wild Borneo, such as the work of Conrad and Maugham, and the more recent travel writing of Birsch (1961), Domalain (1973), Linklater (1990) and O'Hanlon (1994) discussed in Chapter Four. It is an extreme example of the marketing for Sarawak and longhouse tours that appeals to Western fantasy and the legendary vision of wild Borneo. However, like so much of that marketing, the passage asserts that this fantasy is the contemporary lived reality for longhouse people in Sarawak and it suggests that this living legend is available to tourists if they purchase a longhouse tour.

Chapter 6: Making Money From a Longhouse

> I am arguing that at the level of economic relations, aesthetic exchange (the collecting and marketing of artefacts, and so on) and the sociology of interaction, there is no real difference between moderns and those who act the part of primitives in the universal drama of modernity. Modern people have more money, but the ex-primitive is quick to accept the terms of modern economics (MacCannell 1992:34).

> Don't go where the path leads rather go where there is no path and leave a trail! (AOS company maxim).

This chapter provides a documentary account of a typical tour to Stamang longhouse in 1996 from the tourists' departure from Kuching to their return. The emphasis is on the visit to the longhouse and the aim is to provide a detailed record of the timetable and the itinerary of events provided by the longhouse residents. Certain issues that shape the account of the tour attract limited commentary in order to provide clear focus. In my experience Stamang tours differed little in style and content to those at other tourist longhouses and, accordingly, the chapter draws on my experiences and observations at other tourist longhouses. What is described here is a generic tour program and itinerary that is replicated (with variations) across the longhouse tour industry.

The account of the tour demonstrates that the Iban residents were involved in the provision of a business product. That consideration led to an emphasis in my field research on understanding and recording the economics of a longhouse tour from the Iban point of view. Accordingly, this chapter provides a detailed record of the fees charged by the residents for the component items of the itinerary, including accommodation and food, as well as the entertainment and demonstrations. Except where indicated, the fees outlined are what was charged at Stamang and on the whole they correspond with the fees charged across all tourist longhouses. Two tables summarising the charges referred to in this chapter can be found in Appendix G.

The chapter also examines the economic aspects of longhouse tourism as they relate to longhouse communities, *bilik*-families and individual residents. The evidence is that Iban participation in the industry as product providers involved a strong interest in commercialism. However, the Iban had little input at the entrepreneurial level of the longhouse tour business and in relation to the marketing material used to promote the

tours, and the extent to which they were involved in the initial development of the generic model of a longhouse tour is beyond the scope of this study. The main features of the model seem to have been in place for at least 20 years. The evidence in this account is that at Stamang, within the terms of their agreement to provide an established program and itinerary, the residents were active, business-focussed participants in the longhouse tour industry. The interaction between longhouse residents and tourists on longhouse tours occurred in the context of designed-for-tourism events that were staged and charged for as part of the existing business arrangements between tour companies and longhouse residents. This involves multiple, complex fee arrangements between individuals and *bilik*-families within the longhouse, as well as between individuals, *bilik*-families and tour companies. Furthermore, the work of residents involved organising and providing services needed to operate their longhouse as a tourism business and the management of social factors between *bilik*-families and the community as a whole.

This chapter also provides comment to focus the issue that the itinerary provided by residents was a combination of both contemporary longhouse culture and the recreation and fabrication of historical longhouse culture in a way that mirrored the tradition of wild Borneo and the stereotypes of the marketing brochures. The product was a series of performances and historical fictions in which the longhouse became a performance site and the residents became actors in a performance about the past and the present. For the duration of the tour the life of the longhouse became a fabricated Iban way of life for business purposes.

Summary of a longhouse tour: Stamang as a case study

Travelling to Stamang

On a longhouse tour the journey from Kuching to Stamang took most of a day. It included: a four and half hour trip in a mini van from Kuching to the Batang Ai hydroelectric dam; a brief stop at the town of Serian where tourists were shown the local market; lunch at the town of Lachau, and a one hour and 45 minute journey by

longboat across the hydroelectric dam and up the Engkari River. Tourists did not generally arrive at Stamang until late afternoon. As a typical tour to Stamang was for two days and one night, and tourists left about 1pm on the second day, the time spent at the longhouse was a late afternoon, a night and a morning. Much of the two-day tour was taken up with travel. There were an average of two such tours each week.

The average tour group size to Stamang (and, generally, to other tourist longhouses) was between four and eight persons (although during the period of fieldwork, Stamang had the distinction of receiving the largest single group of tourists to a longhouse in one day, 110 persons[1]).

The boat journey to Stamang was both scenic and dramatic and was one of the principal reasons the longhouse was selected by AOS as a tourist destination. Despite the number of longhouses situated on the Engkari River, only two, Spaya and Stamang, received tourists, as the rest were considered too 'modern' by the longhouse tour operators to be suitable for tourism.

The journey began at the Batang Ai Hydroelectric dam, approximately half an hour by road from Lubok Antu (see Map 4, Chapter Two). Floating inside the dam wall, on large logs brought from logging camps up river, were three shops and a café run by local Chinese merchants. The shops and café acted as a floating jetty for longboats and a meeting place for longhouse residents making their way to and from town (see Figure 22). The floating jetty was also the nearest point at which fuel for longboats could be bought. A regular bus service ran from the dam wall to Lubok Antu and the larger nearby town, Sri Aman. From the shops floating next to the dam wall there was a clear view across the vast hydroelectric lake looking up to the mountains. On the opposite side of the lake sits the Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort. The Hilton maintained its own private jetty just around the corner, out of sight of the floating jetty, and tourists en route to the Hilton were unlikely to be aware that a separate jetty existed for local residents.

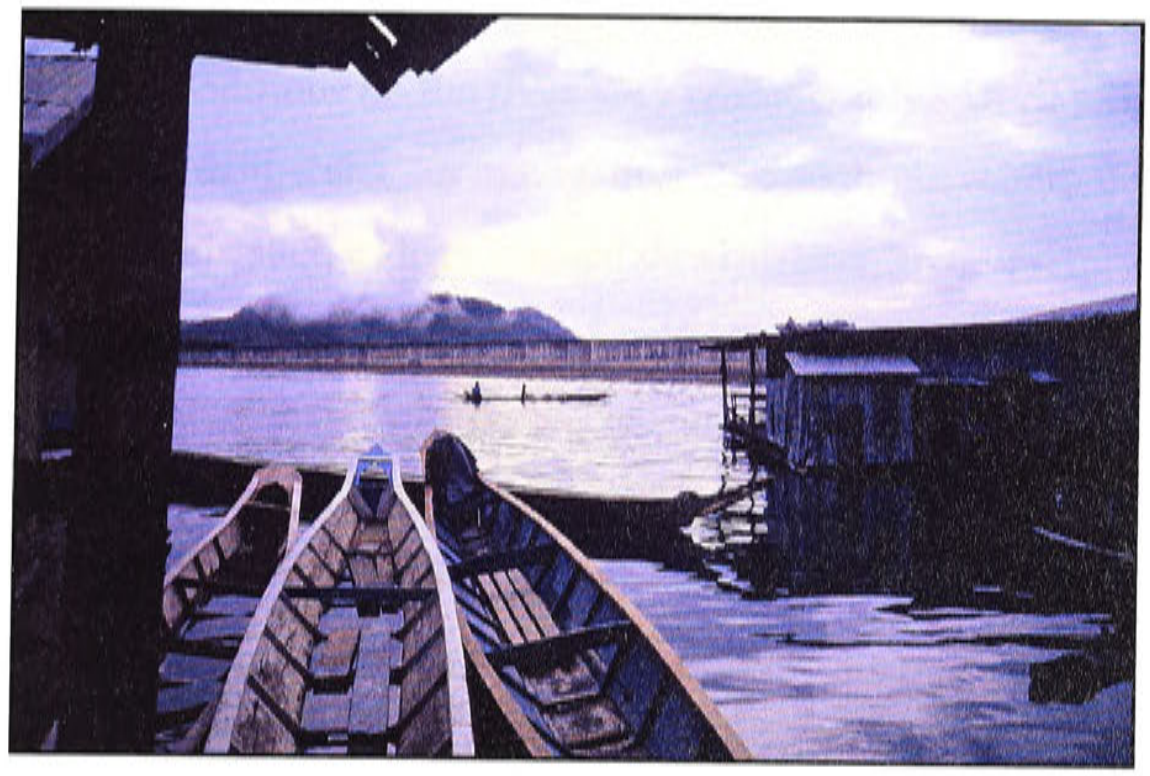

Figure 22: Longboats at floating wharf on Batang Ai hydroelectric dam.

The Engkari River is one of a number of rivers and minor tributaries that flow into the Batang Ai Hydroelectric dam. From the floating jetty, in a local longboat, it took approximately one hour to cross the hydroelectric lake and, depending on the water level (which varied considerably depending on rainfall and the season), it took around 45 minutes to travel up the Engkari River to Stamang. The trip across the lake is picturesque and offers a chance to view local bird life, fish farms run by local longhouse residents and the Hilton resort in the distance.

Travelling across the lake can be dangerous because longboats are designed only for river use. On average, they draw about three feet of water and this, combined with their length and width (usually around thirty by four feet), makes them unstable on open expanses of water. The size of the lake means that large waves can form during storms and, although Iban from the area are skilled at navigating river rapids, their ability to deal with difficult conditions on open water is limited. In the first years after the hydroelectric dam was built several locals drowned and tour companies now take the precaution of supplying life jackets to all tourists.[2] Use of life jackets amongst locals is negligible.

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[1] Other tourist longhouses on the Skrang and Lemanak Rivers also received large groups. However, to my knowledge, none of these exceeded 50 persons.

[2] Following the drowning of a tourist in the lake in 1999 the Sarawak State Government made life jackets compulsory on tourist longboats. Local residents are not required to wear lifejackets for everyday domestic travel.

After crossing the lake, the water level gradually recedes and boatmen must navigate up the Engkari River.[3] Conditions on the river vary considerably. During the rainy season, the river may be too dangerous for navigation due to high water, the speed of the current, or floating debris such as logs washed downstream from upriver logging camps. In the dry season, the water level drops and parts of the river become less than a foot deep. Longboats frequently have to be carried or pushed across shallow spots on the river. When carrying tourists, this was often done with the tourists still seated in the boats, an action reminiscent of Western travellers in the colonial past. At times 'traffic' on the river can be congested and collisions on tight bends or around blind corners on the river's upper reaches are a constant cause for concern.

From the grandeur of the dam, the river trip became a picturesque journey up river through the jungle and it was frequently remarked upon by tourists as one of the most enjoyable parts of their longhouse tour. As the river climbed into the mountains large trees began to overhang the river and the surrounding forest became denser. Jungle-covered hills sloped upward from the river and wildlife was abundant. Sightings of water birds and macaques were common. In contrast, over the last few bends before arriving at Stamang the hills gave way to swidden rice farms, small pepper crops and occasional stands of rubber trees belonging to longhouse residents. Visitors arrived at a small landing spot near a sharp turn in the river, with the longhouse on the hill above overlooking the river bend.

Arriving at the longhouse

The program of activities began as soon as the longboats carrying tourists rounded the last bend on the river below the longhouse.[4] In the longhouse, Tuai Rumah would be informed that the tourists had arrived (usually by a child who had run up from the riverbank) and he would put on a specially-made feathered headdress and a beaded necklace (see Figure 23) and hurry down to the riverbank to greet the tourists, shaking

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[3] Without exception, men were in charge of the outboard motor on the longboat when ferrying tourists to the longhouse, although the punter at the front of the boat was often a woman. With longboat travel other than for tourism it was not uncommon for women to operate the outboard motor.

their hands and saying 'welcome' in English.[5] Tourists were then directed by their guide to proceed up the short path to the longhouse above.

Occasionally, depending on the size and importance of the tour group, one or two women from the longhouse would don traditional costume (like that seen in the marketing material) and accompany Tuai Rumah down to the riverbank to greet tourists (Figure 23). On two occasions while I was present, AOS requested that the women beat small metal gongs (*tawak*) and the guide explained to the tourists that this was a customary greeting 'to scare off any bad spirits that may have arrived with the tour group'.[6]

The 'welcome' on the riverbank at Stamang was staged as part of the tour program and was intended to make the tourists feel like important guests. In this sense the welcome was a significant part of the longhouse tour product and was designed to evoke or reproduce the way longhouse hospitality and custom had been experienced by, or represented to, the West in the past. The connotation was that longhouse communities were still remote places and that the arrival of visitors remained a significant event requiring formal celebration and ceremony.

However, it must also be borne in mind that some of the things staged for, or shown to, tourists on a longhouse tour, including welcoming ceremonies, residents using blowpipes, trophy skulls hanging in the *ruai* and dance performed in traditional costume, had either historically been, or continued to be, part of Iban custom and longhouse life. A key issue arising from this, and an important question if longhouse tours are to continue in their current form, is the extent to which the tour program, in

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[4] Some exceptions are discussed below in the section on special activities.

[5] Tuai Rumah explained to me that he had made the headdress solely to wear for tourists, but that it was in a traditional style.

[6] The beating of gongs as part of traditional ceremonies (usually to warn off pernicious spirits) is still common in longhouses throughout Sarawak and Borneo (see Sather 1993a:86). For example, State and Federal Ministers (and other visiting dignitaries) are usually received at longhouses with a formal welcome, including a reception at the riverbank by the *Tuai Rumah* and several residents of both sexes dressed in traditional costume and accompanied by the beating of gongs and, if the longhouse follows Iban cosmology, an offering including the sacrifice of a small pig. However, in my experiences in various tourist longhouses, I only saw two tour groups greeted in this manner. In non-tourist longhouses where travellers arrived with the intention of staying for a night (or several), they were not greeted with a welcoming ceremony. The only other occasion I witnessed gongs being beaten by the riverbank 'to scare off bad spirits' was when a body was being transported across the river to be carried to the nearby cemetery.

which longhouse residents are complicit, stages Iban culture in a manner that bears little or no resemblance to contemporary Iban living and occurs only as part of tourism or other commercialised expressions of Iban identity (for example, traditional dance as part of a televised Iban beauty queen contest or a state reception involving a display of 'ethnic costume' for visiting dignitaries).

Figure 23: Tuai Rumah Sonuk of Stamang (right) and another longhouse resident greeting a tourist by the riverbank.

After proceeding up the path from the riverbank to the longhouse, tourists had the choice of entering the longhouse using the traditional notched log stepladder (*tangga*) or a newly constructed staircase. Longhouse residents had built the staircase at AOS's request because it was feared that tourists might slip and fall if they used the *tangga* and sue the company for compensation.[7] Upon entering the longhouse tourists were taken to the guesthouse to settle in and store their baggage.[8] They were then directed by their guide to remove their shoes, proceed along the part of the *ruai* used as a thoroughfare and sit on the floor of the *ruai* adjacent to Tuai Rumah's *bilik*.

About ten minutes later a small offering (*piring*) was prepared in the *ruai* outside Tuai Rumah's *bilik* and the tour group (assisted by their guide) were encouraged to

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[7] AOS did not pay residents for the labour required to build the staircase, although they were reimbursed for the cost of materials (Kruse 1998).

[8] The guesthouse at Stamang, built as two large additional *bilik* at the downriver end of the longhouse, could sleep approximately 40 people on gym mats placed in rows across two large, open-plan rooms.

participate by placing the small bowls containing the food along the *ruai* (Figure 24). The offering included boiled rice (*asi*), glutinous rice cakes (*asi pulat*), rice cooked in leaf packets (*ketupat*), salt, rice wine (*tuak*), puffed rice (*rendai*)[9] and the sacrifice of a small chicken.

Figure 24: Tuai Rumah Sunok of Stamang preparing an offering with tourists in the *ruai* of the longhouse.

On most occasions, Tuai Rumah performed the *piring*. However, sometimes his brother Pengulu Rentap took his place. Tuai Rumah always checked that the tourists had properly arranged the offering and then spoke an offertory, as is customary, while he gently waved a live chicken above the food.[10] The chicken was then taken outside and killed, cooked on an open fire, and added to the food making up the offering.[11] Tuai Rumah always spoke his offertory in Iban and the tour guide translated it for the tourists. In the offertory, Tuai Rumah asked for prosperity for the longhouse and that the tourists travel safely back to their home country. Longhouse residents explained to me that this was customary when performing a *piring* while travellers were present. The conclusion to Tuai Rumah's offertory was a plea for more tourists to come to the longhouse and for the community's tourism business to remain strong and profitable,

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[9] Popcorn was often substituted for puffed rice.

[10] Iban offertory custom has been well documented (see Gomes 1911:202; Freeman 1992:20; Jensen 1974:79; Ngadi 1998:69-70; Sutlive 1978:67). The offertories I witnessed at Stamang, both for tourism and non-tourism purposes, did not differ substantially from others I witnessed in non-tourist longhouses.

[11] This part of the *piring* for the tourists differed from other *piring* in that the chicken was always sacrificed out of sight, on the veranda (*tanju*). When tourists were not present the chicken's throat was usually cut next to where the offerings were arranged in the *ruai*.

although I never saw any guide translate this part. After the *piring*, tourists were invited to have a cup of tea and a biscuit while they stayed seated in the *ruai*.

In general, the manner and form of the offering for tourists followed that of offerings made by Stamang residents as part of traditional rituals that were still commonplace in the longhouse. During my fieldwork I witnessed, for example, offerings to cure sickness, to ask for success with studies and for luck in hunting. In this respect, the offering staged for tourists was not a 'tradition' that was being recreated, or reclaimed, for tourism. However, neither was it simply a reflection of reality, because *adat* Iban does not require that a welcoming ceremony and an offering be performed when non-dignitary visitors arrive at the longhouse.

For the costumed greeting by the riverbank and offering in the *ruai* the community charged a $50 MYR standard fee (for both activities combined) that was invoiced to AOS as a 'welcoming ceremony'. On other tours, depending on the size of the group and the size of the offering requested by AOS, a 'medium welcoming ceremony' fee of $100 MYR was charged, and, occasionally, $300 MYR was charged for a 'grand welcoming ceremony'.[12] Sometimes the welcoming ceremony was not staged at all in order to cut costs on a tour. This happened if AOS had been obliged to offer a longhouse tour at reduced rate, which occurred from time to time due to various reciprocal arrangements with other tour companies. In such a case, tourists arrived at the landing and proceeded directly to the guesthouse and had the choice of either waiting or wandering around the longhouse and surrounds until dinnertime.

The fee charged by the longhouse for the welcoming ceremony covered the cost of providing the food and afforded some income for the community. Significantly, with the welcoming ceremonies staged at Stamang, residents had decided not to collect individual wages for the performance but for the fee to be deposited in a communally-owned community fund (administered by Pengulu Rentap) for spending on community projects.[13] In addition to the fee for the welcoming ceremony, the longhouse charged

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[12] This included dancers and musicians (both in costume) and an offering with a piglet instead of a chicken.
[13] For example, fund money was spent on cement for paving a path around the longhouse and down to the river, assisting families with funeral expenses and, significantly, buying materials for the construction of a new longhouse.

AOS a $10 MYR head tax (*cukai pala*) for every tourist who visited the longhouse in groups below ten persons. Tour groups over ten were charged a reduced rate of $7 MYR per head. This fee was also paid into the longhouse community fund and used for community projects and was standard in all tourist longhouses with the rate varying only minimally (one or two Malaysian ringgit).

After the welcoming ceremony the guide directed tourists back to the guesthouse, assisted them to sort out their bedding and put up mosquito nets and explained how the toilet facilities worked.[14] The guide informed tourists that dinner would be served shortly after sundown (in around an hour and a half) and encouraged them in the intervening period to take a rest or to stroll around the longhouse, take pictures and look at the handicrafts on display in the *ruai*.

Dinner

At Stamang if the tour group consisted of ten or less people, dinner was served in the *bilik* of Tuai Rumah. Larger groups would be served dinner in the section of the *ruai* abutting Tuai Rumah's *bilik*. This arrangement was unique to Stamang and had been specially negotiated between AOS and Tuai Rumah in order to add 'authenticity' to the tours and to distinguish them from other tours in which tourists generally ate in the guesthouse, with their food prepared by their guide (with the help of cooking assistants from the longhouse). The arrangement at Stamang meant that tourists had more time in the longhouse, interacted more with residents and had the chance to see inside Tuai Rumah's *bilik* (which they were encouraged to photograph).[15]

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[14] The 'toilet demonstration' was often discussed amongst longhouse residents as one of the strangest parts of a tour and many residents found it deeply humorous that tourists had to be shown how to squat and what to do. Many tourists complained that the toilets were inadequate and that they thought the guesthouse facilities should be improved, a complaint that seemed at odds with another frequent complaint, that the longhouse was 'too modern'.

[15] That the tour program at Stamang was designed to allow tourists a chance to see 'inside' a *bilik* has relevance to MacCannell's framework of 'back' and 'front' regions in tourist experience, the 'front' regions being areas where tourists interpret things as 'inauthentic' and 'for show', and the back regions being spaces that tourists interpret to be the location of 'real' or 'authentic' culture and experience (MacCannell 1973:592). The demarcation between *bilik*-apartment, as private non–tourist space, and the *ruai* and *tanju,* as tourist space, that occurs with longhouse tourism matches MacCannell's theory well, particularly given that many tourists were eager to see inside a *bilik*-apartment, no doubt out of simple curiosity but as some expressed to me, because they wanted to see inside a 'real room'

When the tour group entered Tuai Rumah's *bilik* they were asked to sit in a circle on rattan mats that had been laid out on the floor. Cushions were supplied, as most tourists found sitting on the wooden floor difficult, being unaccustomed to sitting cross-legged for any length of time. Once everybody was seated the female members of Tuai Rumah's *bilik* and the cooking assistants employed for that night brought the meal out from the kitchen on plastic serving dishes and laid it out on the rattan mats in front of the group. The tour guide offered the tourists the choice of eating 'Iban style' or 'European style' and demonstrated how to eat rice using one's fingers and how to use a fingerbowl during a meal. In addition, and contrary to the norm, tourists were offered the use of cutlery, plates and bowls.[16]

Tuai Rumah's sons and other male members of the *bilik* sat and ate with the tourists. Often Tuai Rumah would have other guests staying in his *bilik*, such as friends of his children, and any male visitors would be invited to dine with the group. The female members of Tuai Rumah's *bilik* ate separately in the kitchen after the tourists and any men in Tuai Rumah's *bilik* had finished their meals.[17] On most nights the women included Tuai Rumah's wife, sister in-law, and granddaughter and any female cooking assistants employed for the evening from other *bilik*-families.

The dinner prepared for tourists generally consisted of tinned beef, store-bought chicken, small river fish, rice, vegetables and ferns.[18] Thus, the local content of the meal was restricted to the vegetables (which are grown by residents), the ferns (which were collected from the forest surrounding the longhouse), the rice and the fish. In addition, at the request of AOS, the residents included palm heart (*upa pantu*) with every dinner so that tourists could experience 'local delicacies'. Guides always took care to encourage tourists to try the palm heart.[19]

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[16] When tours first started to Stamang tourists were served dinner on plates without cutlery, following Iban tradition. As a consequence, many tourists did not eat their meals because they were unaccustomed to eating with their hands or felt it to be unhygienic. After several tours, AOS was forced to supply Tuai Rumah's*bilik* with cutlery.

[17] This follows established Iban custom, which requires that women eat separately (usually seated on the floor in the kitchen) to men when important guests are entertained. On occasions without guests *bilik*-families usually eat together.

[18] The tinned fish, chicken and beef were cooked with Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) added.

[19] The palm heart, which is the edible part of the palm, is the core or centre of the main trunk. In order to harvest the heart the entire palm must be cut down and sliced open. Numerous layers of the trunk must be removed until the very core at the base of the trunk is revealed. A large palm (over ten feet high) typically provided 3 feet of palm heart, which was enough for dinner for around two or three tour groups.

With every tourist meal a dessert was provided that consisted of cakes and sweets purchased by the guide at the town of Lachau where tours stopped for lunch en route to the longhouse. In addition, tea, coffee and biscuits were served with dinner and boiled water was made available, although most tourists refused to drink the water.

The meals served to tourists at Stamang (and generally in all tourist longhouses) differed from the regular meals consumed by longhouse residents and from other local cuisine, including Chinese, Indian and Malay. Each meal was specially prepared to be interesting but not confronting and to appeal to the Western palate. Tourists were always inclined to try local vegetables and delicacies, such as palm heart, but few were willing to eat game meat or even chicken supplied by the longhouse. One reason for this was that many tourists to longhouses had no experience eating in Malaysia apart from in large hotel bistros and restaurants, as they had transferred directly to a tour from hotels such as the Kuching Hilton or the Holiday Inn. Another reason cited by tourists to Stamang was that they felt that the longhouse, Tuai Rumah's *bilik* and the kitchen were unhygienic.[20] Tourists were open in expressing this view and some even discussed the standard of hygiene in Tuai Rumah's *bilik* during the meal. Indeed, before dining with Tuai Rumah and his family, to ensure that tourists would not cause offence by hesitating too long with their food or refusing to eat, most guides showed them the tinned food supplied by AOS, so that they were aware of the source of the meat for their meal. This was standard practice for guides taking tour groups to other tourist longhouses.

The Stamang community charged for the dinner service and other meals. The fee, billed as *beras* (meaning husked, uncooked rice), included a flat $10 MYR charge for every group of ten persons (or less) and was calculated to covers costs for cooking oil, gas,[21] firewood, tea, coffee and rice consumed. The fee ensured that residents did not bear any of the cost of providing meals for tourists and Tuai Rumah's *bilik* usually profited a couple of Malaysian ringgit from each tour group. A separate $10 MYR fee called *pemasak* (referring to a cook or kitchen helper) was charged for every group of ten

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[20] The kitchen (*dapor*) in Tuai Rumah's was visible to tourists while they ate their meal.

persons (or less) for the two cooking assistants who prepared and served the meal and who each received $5 MYR. A roster system allocated cooking assistants on a revolving basis through every *bilik* in the longhouse. Cooking assistants were usually women and, in addition to preparing meals, they were responsible for maintaining a constant supply of coffee and tea for tourists throughout their stay in the longhouse (although, in practice, this was often carried out by Tuai Rumah's *bilik* out of expediency). On the few occasions when a male carried out the role of cooking assistant, it was because a female member of the rostered *bilik* was not able to do the work and a male member of the *bilik* had stepped in to ensure that the income remained with that *bilik*. Other tourist longhouses had similar roster systems for the same service.

In addition to the above fees, Stamang charged AOS a $5 MYR fee for every four tourists for all the vegetables supplied with dinner and lunch. Most *bilik* in the longhouse had a small vegetable garden at the rear of the *bilik* and vegetables were sourced from whichever *bilik* had them available. The palm heart, ferns and bamboo shoots supplied with meals came from the surrounding forest, providing income without prior expenditure. However, during my fieldwork I observed that, because of the frequency of tourist visits, the palms used to supply palm heart were becoming harder to find close to the longhouse, as they had been cut down to feed tourists. Residents often walked long distances to source palms large enough to provide a suitable amount to feed the tour groups. In contrast, the ferns and bamboo shoots supplied for tourist meals were abundant and found within two minutes walk of the longhouse.

After dinner entertainment

After dinner, tourists chatted with Tuai Rumah, with their guide acting as interpreter. I noticed that tourists were generally predictable in their conversation and tended to ask very similar questions, such as who lived in Tuai Rumah's *bilik*, whether it was 'one family', where people slept and so forth. Tuai Rumah (with the help of the guide) would politely answer questions and, typically, entertain tourists by showing them photographs of him sent back to the longhouse by other tourists. If conversation

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[21] Every *bilik*-family in the longhouse owned a small cooker, run on a gas bottle.

faltered, as it frequently did due to the difficulty of conversing through a translator, Tuai Rumah and any other Iban at the dinner table would sit in silence while the guide pointed out and explained the purpose of items stored around the *bilik*, such as antique jars, bush knives and hand-made baskets.

As a rule language difficulties between residents and tourists made conversation difficult, despite the fact that a tour guide was always present and acted as an interpreter. This was offset to some degree because the tour program was organised in such a way that the time available for conversation between residents and tourists was limited. The structure of the longhouse tour as an occasion to visit and see wild people, and the series of theatrical events that made up the itinerary, was not designed for efficient communication and understanding for either side.[22]

While tourists were chatting with Tuai Rumah, the dancers and musicians prepared for the evening entertainment that followed shortly after dinner. At the same time the female members of Tuai Rumah's *bilik* prepared the performance area. They fetched woven blankets (*pua kumbu*) and hung them on the outside wall of Tuai Rumah's *bilik*. This followed a request from AOS to provide an interesting backdrop for the dancers and for the photographs that tourists invariably took of them.[23] The hanging of *pua kumbu* in the *ruai* is an important part of various traditional ceremonies, such as during *gawai antu* (the festival for the dead), on *gawai dayak* day and when welcoming important guests, but, in my experience, the longhouse is not generally decorated in this manner for ordinary guests.[24] The women also laid out rattan mats (*tikai*) in the *ruai* for

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[22] In some longhouse residents had became more skilled at English over time, particularly those who had the most exposure to tourists. This included Tuai Rumah Sunok, Pengulu Rentap, the men who regularly ferried tourists up and down river and teenagers of both sexes (because they tended to be most curious about tourists and were encouraged by their parents to learn English). In my observation middle-aged and older women interacted the least with tourists, partly because they tended not to get involved in the drinking sessions with tourists (see following pages) and partly because men generally took the lead in dealing with tourists. For example, with the dinner the female members of Tuai Rumah Sonuk's *bilik* served the meal but did not sit with tourists. Furthermore, many Iban men had better English skills because of their experience of the wider world gained while on *bejalai*. Longhouse residents often remarked that the process of gradually acquiring English allowed them to initiate conversation, which made interaction with tourists more interesting.

[23] Stamang was the only tourist longhouse at which *pua kumbu* were hung up to provide a backdrop for the tourist dance performance.

[24] A brief summary of the significance and role of *pua kumbu* in Iban society is provided in King (1993:249-250) and Heppell (1989). For detail on design and weaving technique see Haddon and Start (1936), as used by *manang* in ritual procedures see Jensen (1974) and (Graham 1987), for death rites see Sather (1993a), during *gawai dayak* see Barclay (1980) and for a general overview of most ritual uses see Ngadi (1998).

tourists and residents to sit on and watch the dance performance[25] and, as many older tourists were not capable of sitting cross-legged for an extended period, a specially constructed bench was placed against the wall opposite Tuai Rumah's *bilik* for those tourists unable to sit on the floor.[26] When these preparations were complete the tourists were told by their guide that it was time to move to the *ruai* opposite Tuai Rumah's *bilik* (where the offering had been held earlier in the day) and be seated in preparation for watching the 'dance performance' about to be conducted.

On nights when tourist performances were conducted, around a quarter of the population of the longhouse (usually about 30 people) gathered in the *ruai* outside Tuai Rumah's *bilik* to form a crowd and provide a friendly and festive atmosphere for tourists. The longhouse did not charge AOS a fee for community participation in the night's entertainment, even though that participation was expected. This arrangement was a point of contention between some residents and AOS throughout the time the community was involved with tourism.

Individuals or *bilik*-family groups who did not wish to participate in the tourist show remained in their *bilik* or sat in the *ruai* towards either end of the longhouse where the lights from the generator did not reach and tourists could not easily see them. This afforded them some privacy from the tourists and from the entertainment occurring in front of Tuai Rumah's *bilik*. During the rice-harvesting season the number of residents who participated in the nightly activities for tourists (excluding paid performers) was noticeably less because during the day residents worked long hours carrying large sacks of rice back from their farms and they were often too tired to stay awake and participate in tourist entertainment.

In the *ruai* outside Tuai Rumah's *bilik* a number of neon lights had been installed by AOS and these were turned on during the dance performance to provide tourists with a better view of the performance and to provide light for taking photographs. The lights were purchased by AOS shortly before the first tours to Stamang commenced and were

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[25] At Mejong longhouse on the Skrang River a $10 MYR fee was charged for laying out the rattan mats in the *ruai* for the evening dance performance. To my knowledge, Mejong was the only longhouse that charged for this task.

installed by residents free of charge. The company did not need to purchase a generator, as a number of residents owned small portable Yamaha generators to power lights in their *bilik*.[27] The largest, which was owned by Pengulu, was used to power the lights used for tourism and, while fuel costs were covered by AOS, repairs were not. A paradox of longhouse tourism is that tour companies require 'modern' lighting in tourist longhouses because it allows for a night entertainment program, while the longhouse itself must appear old and 'traditional'.

The longhouse charged AOS $15 MYR per night to cover fuel used by the generator and, unless tourists wanted to stay up late and chat in the *ruai* with the lights on, $15 MYR easily covered this aspect of the tourists' costs. On evenings when tourists were not present the generator was rarely used except for community meetings or nights when several families would pay for the hire of a movie and watch it on Pengulu's television and video (the only television and video in the longhouse).[28] Leftover fuel paid for by AOS was often used on these occasions and in this way it benefited the entire community.

The arrangement between longhouse residents and AOS for use of the generator, like certain other aspects of the longhouse fee structure and business arrangements discussed further on, demonstrates residents' knowledge of the subtleties of commercial processes and their willingness to utilise that knowledge to profit on a limited scale.

The evening entertainment for tourists followed a set format. It commenced with the tourists being given a glass of rice wine and drinking a toast with Tuai Rumah just prior to the dance performance. Tuai Rumah always raised his glass of *tuak* and shouted 'hooohaaa' and drank the contents of his glass in one, quick swig. The tour guide then gestured to the tourists that they should do the same and, as the tour group drank, the residents seated nearby would clap and shout 'ya ya ya'. The shouting of 'ya ya ya' by

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[26] Stamang was the only longhouse that supplied a bench for tourists and in other longhouses tourists simply stood and watched the dance performance if they were unable to sit cross-legged.

[27] Although many longhouse communities in Sarawak have electric lights powered by large diesel generators (bought with the assistance of government grants), or by a number of small *bilik*-family-owned portable generators, it is common for poorer communities to have only one or two generators that are run infrequently because residents lack funds to buy fuel. Tourist longhouses are the exception; they all have ample, bright, neon lighting.

[28] Movies were rented from a shop in the town of Lubok Antu.

longhouse residents during the toast (and other drinking sessions with tourists) provides an interesting example of Iban adopting tourist customs. Longhouse residents said they had learned to shout 'ya ya ya' from tourists and, in particular, Tuai Rumah said that he had learned it from some Dutch tourists (pers.comm.Kjartan Eide). However, residents also told me that drinking *tuak* in one quick swig and shouting 'hooohaaa' was a long established Iban tradition.[29] After the toast, tourists were supplied with as much *tuak* as they wanted. Throughout the evening any bottles requested by tourists were also passed around to the residents forming the crowd.[30]

The longhouse charged AOS $3 MYR for each bottle of *tuak* consumed by tourists and the fee was paid to the *bilik* that had supplied it. The longhouse did not have a system for allocating which *bilik* supplied the *tuak* and AOS simply paid the *bilik* that happened to have a batch ready for drinking on that night. As most *bilik* had *tuak* brewing in various stages and only some bottles were ready for drinking, this arrangement worked well.

After the toast, the tour group and their guide sat in the *ruai* and the guide explained to tourists that it was time to present Tuai Rumah with the 'gifts' that they had brought with them. The gift-giving ceremony was a prearranged part of the program and the tourists were informed during lunch in the town of Lachau en route to the longhouse that it was customary to give gifts to the longhouse (by presenting them to Tuai Rumah) to show appreciation for the hospitality of the community. Tourists were not generally informed that the tour company paid the longhouse a head tax for each visitor, although, if asked, guides usually explained the arrangement. At Lachau, on each tour, the guide took tourists into the shop next to the Lachau café (where lunch was served) and made suggestions about appropriate gifts.[31] Using tour guides as intermediaries, the community at Stamang had expressed a preference for certain 'gifts', which included

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[29] Gomes refers to this custom in writing of his experiences with Sarawak Iban in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1911:212).

[30] On most occasions, this was no more than a bottle each, as tourists became drunk quite rapidly, being unfamiliar with the drink and not acclimatised to the heat.

[31] A common assumption made by tourists was that longhouse children should not be given sweets as part of the gift-giving ceremony, so as not to 'ruin their teeth'.

school books, pencils, pens, writing pads, cigarettes and alcohol.[32] Guides generally told tourists that schoolbooks, pencils and stationary would be most appreciated by longhouse residents, as these were useful for assisting with the cost of sending children to school. Usually guides succeeded in convincing tourists to buy these things, though occasionally tourists had already brought something from their home country to give to the residents.

The gift-giving ceremony involved the tourists (or a chosen tourist leader) placing the gifts on the floor of the *ruai* in front of Tuai Rumah (who was seated in front of his *bilik*) at which time Tuai Rumah thanked the tourists in Malay, saying '*terimah kasih*'. The guide translated this to the tourists as, 'He is saying thank you in Iban'.[33] The gifts were divided into 36 piles on the floor of the *ruai*, which corresponded with the number of *bilik* at Stamang and a member from each *bilik* (usually a child) collected that *bilik's* portion of the gifts. Bottles of alcohol and cigarettes were not distributed evenly amongst *bilik* (unless there happened to be 36 or more bottles or packets of cigarettes), but were opened on the spot and consumed that night by the longhouse residents who had gathered to participate as the crowd for the evening's entertainment. While not a cash payment, the alcohol and cigarettes provided some form of material benefit, albeit minor, to those longhouse residents who formed the crowd to entertain the tourists.

The gift-giving ceremony was popular with tourists as it served as a way to acknowledge the hospitality of the longhouse community through the 'traditional payment' of a gift.[34] Furthermore, for many tourists, in my observation, the gift-giving appealed to fantasies about visiting remote people who welcomed travellers into their home in exchange for gifts.[35] Not all tourists shared this view, some seeing the gift-

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[32] As noted in Chapter Seven, the AOS fact sheet outlining the 'adoption' stated that the company wished to discourage Stamang residents from drinking alcohol and smoking. However, AOS never attempted to curb Stamang residents' consumption of either product. In fact, guides actively encouraged tourists to purchase locally-made rice brandy (*langkau*) and cigarettes 'to give to the chief as a present for the longhouse'. Furthermore, drunken interaction between residents and tourists was a key feature of the tours and, as shown further on, drinking sessions were a scheduled part of the evening entertainment. Furthermore, all the regular AOS staff who visited the longhouse smoked and tourists were encouraged to try smoking local tobacco with residents if it was available.

[33] Strictly speaking there is no word in Iban for thank you, although use of the Malay *terimah kasih* is quite common.

[34] The gift-giving ceremony was staged with remarkable similarity at every tourist longhouse I visited.

[35] Not only tourists on organised longhouse tours held these views. I encountered a French tourist in Kuching who had arrived in Sarawak expecting to travel in the interior for several months and had brought only $300 USD, a large bag of beads and tiny souvenir decorative pins of France which he intended to trade with locals in return for their hospitality.

giving ceremony as patronising. This was also the case with some younger longhouse residents who remarked to me that they perceived the ceremony to be patronising but that they went along with it because it provided them with free cigarettes and alcohol.

In a reflection of Urry's contention (1990) that much tourism involves 'play' on the part of tourists, the ceremony was staged in a way that allowed tourists to ignore that they had paid for a commercial longhouse tour and play at believing they were paying for their stay with gifts. This was a point in the tour where the itinerary was open to multiple interpretations, particularly in relation to whether tourists were experiencing 'real' longhouse hospitality. For example, although longhouse residents did not make explicit that the gift-giving ceremony was staged, it was clear that tourists enjoyed participating in the ceremony and, in turn, that longhouse residents valued the gifts given by tourists. In addition, generally, the difference between a staged event for tourism and the ordinary, everyday observance of longhouse custom was not made explicit to tourists.

However, tour companies and longhouse residents did not hide the basic commercial arrangements for tourism if tourists asked about them. Several times I witnessed tourists ask a tour guide (or English-speaking longhouse resident) about the business arrangements for tourism and receive a direct, honest reply covering the basics of the arrangement. Occasionally some tourists wanted to establish whether the tour company was profiting from what they perceived as 'traditional longhouse hospitality' and exploiting people they presumed, wrongly, to have little knowledge of money or commerce. Guides explained that residents were paid and that the tour company was assisting the community with 'development'.

An incident I witnessed in one longhouse involved a group of Swiss tourists who presented the longhouse with several postcards of Switzerland they had brought with them as their contribution during the gift-giving ceremony. Longhouse residents were annoyed by this and murmured that the tourists were stingy (*kenyadi*) and, in front of the tourists, several residents stuffed the postcards through gaps in the floor of the *ruai* where they floated down to settle in the mud beneath the longhouse. The tourists felt that their gift had been treated with disdain.

The postcard incident reveals the complications that arise from the business of paid-for hospitality, where that hospitality, of necessity, requires a level of successful interpersonal communication. On the one hand, the buyer and seller interact on a commercial basis while, on the other hand, there are exchanges that are not purely or explicitly commercial but which nevertheless are an expected and important part of the relationship. The relationship can vary markedly across cultures, at different points in the business and from person to person, in a way that leads to misunderstanding. In the longhouse context, making business out of hospitality is particularly problematic because, arguably, one of the key ingredients of 'the longhouse experience' is that tourists want to feel special and welcomed in the community and not like just another paying customer. During the postcard incident, the residents, if they had been acting in a straightforward, business-like fashion, might have accepted the gift given to them by the Swiss tourists and smiled obligingly so as not to insult their guests. That would have been 'doing good business'. Instead, residents were insulted by the gift from the tour group and behaved in a way that insulted the tourists. A dynamic of longhouse tourism is that tourists and Iban respond emotionally when interacting with each other and occasionally in a way that does not reflect, or is not good for, the business side of the relationship.

The postcard incident also raises questions about the nature and meaning of the commercial relationship between the longhouse community, the tour operator and the tourists. Like the gift-giving ceremony and the other fee-incurring activities discussed below, the postcard incident reveals that, although on one level the longhouse tour industry is about Iban interacting with tourists, the primary business relationship for longhouse residents is with the tour company, because it is the company that defines the format of the tours, brings tourists to the community and, apart from handicraft purchases and gifts, is the source of the tourism income. In the postcard incident, when longhouse residents demonstrated their displeasure at the tourist's gift, they were also demonstrating displeasure at and causing difficulty for the tour operator. Furthermore, they indicated to the tour operator (through the tour guide who witnessed the incident) that, although the gift-giving ceremony was a staged fee-incurring event, only certain kinds of gifts were acceptable. Therefore, at this point in the tour, the business

arrangements were, for Iban, more than simply a matter of providing a stage performance for money and included an element of pride, coupled with local codes of hospitality and appropriate social behaviour. I return to this issue later.

Dance performance

After the gift-giving ceremony the dance performance began. The program included two male and two female dancers, which was standard in all tourist longhouses.[36] Each dancer was paid $8 MYR (which he or she retained), and a roster system was used to ensure that each *bilik* took a turn at supplying a dancer and receiving income. The women danced in 'traditional' ceremonial costume (like that seen in the promotional material), which included a hand-woven skirt, a belt and a large cincture both made from silver coins, a garter, a beaded necklace and an elaborate tiara-shaped silver headdress. In contrast to Iban dress codes of the past (including as recently as the late 1960s and early 1970s) the women danced with their breasts covered and often tourists remarked that this was not what they expected.[37] The men danced in ceremonial costume also similar to the style shown in the marketing, including a loincloth, feathered headdress, beaded necklace and decorated ceremonial sword. Both the men's and women's costumes were sourced from the longhouse and were not provided, or designed, by AOS.[38]

Dancers supplied their own costumes, although, when necessary, it was common for residents to swap and borrow pieces of costume when their *bilik* was rostered to supply a dancer. As a general rule, in all tourist longhouses, tour companies requested that older men were selected as dancers as they had the most traditional tattoos and most closely resembled the image of 'headhunters' depicted in the promotional material (see

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[36] From time-to-time the number would vary depending on who was available to dance.

[37] As discussed in Chapter Four, many accounts of Iban and other non-Muslim indigenous Borneans published prior to the late twentieth century include images of bare-breasted women. A good example (not discussed in Chapter Four) is the coffee table picture book *Vanishing World: The Ibans of Borneo* (Wright, Morrison and Wong 1982), which devotes a large proportion of its content (including the front cover) to full-page, colour photographs of bare-breasted Iban women.

[38] The reason for this is, because most of the items are still commonly used, including at *gawai* celebrations, when welcoming official guests, for some marriage ceremonies (many marriages are now performed in Western dress, see later), in dance competitions, beauty queen contests and cultural displays and in performances not associated with tourism, such as entertainment provided with an election rally.

Figure 25). With female dancers there was a preference for younger girls, as they were considered by longhouse residents and tour companies to be more 'beautiful' and more photogenic (the assumption was that tourists would have the same view and generally they did).

The performance followed a set format, with each dancer taking it in turn to dance individually, alternating between the male and female dancers. After the dancers had completed their individual routine all four would join together and dance in a circle as a finale. Tour guides generally described the male dancers as performing a 'traditional warrior dance' while the women's dance was described simply as 'traditional'.[39] Notably, at Stamang and other tourist longhouses, guides generally provided little explanation about the dancing. This was because the guides were usually not Iban and lacked specific knowledge on the subject.[40]

Figure 25: Dancers posing for photographs at Mejong longhouse, Skrang River.

[39] Sporadically, at Stamang, a 'mortar dance' was performed. This involved a male longhouse member picking up in his teeth a large carved wooden mortar (weighing several kilos and used for husking rice prior to the introduction of machine rice mills) and dancing with it in his mouth. The mortar dance is a well-known Iban dance and images of Iban men performing it are common in promotional material for Sarawak and longhouse tourism.
[40] During fieldwork I only encountered two Iban guides, although most non-Iban guides spoke Iban well.

At the end of the performance, the dancers lined up with their backs against the *pua kumbu* and posed for photographs (Figure 25).[41] The female dancers posed standing straight with their arms by their side and the male dancers did the same, although sometimes the men would strike a pose with their sword in their hand or between their teeth. Tourists were encouraged to pose with the dancers and the photography session often continued for over ten minutes as tourists posed in different combinations with each other and the dancers.

At Stamang and other tourist longhouses, I regularly discussed with longhouse residents the topic of dance (it featured frequently in conversation because it was a standard part of the tour program in every tourist longhouse). Residents explained that the basic choreography of the individual dance performances followed 'traditional' patterns and did not include any specially choreographed elements for tourists (this was the case across all tourist longhouses). Furthermore, dancing as part of festivals and to entertain guests is a long-established Iban tradition (as it is for other Bornean longhouse-dwelling groups). There are numerous references to dance in ethnographic and travel accounts of Borneo's non-Malay indigenous peoples (see Graham 1870; Gomes 1911; Krohn 1927; on Kenyah and Kayan see Hose 1988, 1994; Jensen 1974; Wright et al 1982; Linklater 1990; O'Hanlon 1994) and it is prominent in Sarawak and longhouse tour promotional material. In addition, 'traditional' dance of the kind witnessed by tourists is not wholly a custom of the past and is still performed at important festivals and events such as weddings. Residents discussed Iban dancing traditions proudly, though disparaging remarks were often made about the quality of dancing in other longhouses involved in organised tourism.

The dance performance was accompanied by music played on a combination of large gongs (*tawak*), small gongs (*bendai*) and large, bongo-style drums (*ketaboh*) (Figure 26). The same music was played for every performance and varied only marginally in tune and rhythm between the rostered musicians. The longhouse charged a fee of $4 MYR per musician and it was standard for four musicians to provide the music during

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[41] The image in Figure 25 does not include the *pua kumbu* backdrop, because it depicts dancers in Mejong Longhouse, where *pua kumbu* were not used as props.

the dance performance. Musicians were chosen for each performance using the same roster system as the dancers and each musician retained the $4 MYR fee.

In addition to the roster system, residents made informal arrangements with each other to further distribute income and work derived from tourism. For example, if a *bilik* was on the roster to provide a dancer for the tourist performance and for some reason no one was available from that *bilik* to dance, the *bilik* could pass on the work to a member of another *bilik*. However, the original *bilik* did not swap for another night on the roster or forfeit its turn. Instead, it retained half the fee for supplying a dancer ($2 MYR), with the other half paid to the replacement dancer ($2 MYR). Other tourist longhouse communities dealt with changes to the roster in a similar way and the system was used for all the individually-waged aspects of the tour program, such as boat driving and blowpipe demonstrations.

Figure 26: Musicians performing at Mejong longhouse, Skrang River.

The roster system for tourist activities in the longhouse brings into sharp relief the ongoing tension between the social and economic independence of the *bilik*-family and the longhouse community conceived as a social and ritual whole. As noted in Chapter One, the *bilik*-family is a major tenet of Iban social organisation and the longhouse way of life (for example, see Sather 1993a, 1996; Freeman 1992; Jensen 1974; Sutlive 1978; Sandin 1967). The longhouse as a tourist attraction brings income to a community by selling longhouse culture (including the entire longhouse structure) bundled together as an all-in-one product. With tourism it is 'the longhouse' that is the attraction rather than individual *bilik*, and the product requires that the longhouse be conceived as a single

business unit. But the roster system acknowledges that, while tourism income is generated from a community-wide initiative, income is distributed to constituent *bilik* of the community in a way that recognises the traditional economic independence and needs of *bilik*-families as separate units within the longhouse.[42]

The roster system used for tourism is similar to and, arguably, has its origins in, traditional forms of labour exchange such as *bedurok*, mentioned in Chapter One. For example, as Freeman explains, during different stages of the rice farming cycle up to six *bilik*-families would undertake collective work on a *bilik*-family's rice farm, but only on the strict basis that the labour was reciprocated (Freeman 1992:234).[43] Moreover, as Freeman explains, *bedurok* also involves a roster, 'when the composition of the group has been decided upon, a rota is drawn up - representing the order in which the farms of constituent *bilek-families* are to be visited' (Freeman 1992:236).

However, with *bedurok*, *bilik*-families participate only if they wish to and they may pull out of the arrangement at any time, assuming reciprocal labour requirements have been met (Freeman 1992:237). While strictly speaking the same level of autonomy applies to rostered work for tourism, the tourism work involves a wider sphere of cooperation than the immediate longhouse community and, therefore, if the longhouse-as-a-business is to operate effectively, *bilik*-families must commit to a longer-term and less flexible type of labour sharing. The longhouse community must also act with a higher degree of collectivity than is conventionally the case, particularly in relation to income-generating activities and, as illustrated in this and other chapters, this arrangement has both advantages and disadvantages for the community, *bilik*-families and individuals.

At Stamang, on nights when a tour group was particularly large, or when the longhouse was full of children who had returned from boarding school,[44] an additional 'mask

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[42] Kadir Din has commented that the use of a roster was standard in Skrang River longhouses involved with tourism in 1995 (Kadir Din 1995:12).

[43] Freeman explains that in the *bedurok* system male and female labour is valued equally (Freeman 1992:237). This is also the case with rostered work for longhouse tourism.

[44] Many of the longhouse's children and teenagers boarded at the small primary school half an hour downriver (by longboat) and the high school at Engkilili (a town around an hour away by bus from the Batang Ai dam jetty). On Friday night most boarders returned to the longhouse and enjoyed catching up with family and friends. Consequently, tourist dance shows and activities were always more energetic and rowdy on Friday nights (and on the

dance' was performed for tourists shortly after the main dance performance.[45] In general, women performed the mask dance, although occasionally a man would perform. The dancers dressed up in loose-fitting men's trousers and used wooden masks carved and painted to look like ghosts (*antu*) (Wright et al 1982:80). Although the dancers performed to the same music played for the previous dance performance, they would also parody the style of the male dancers who had preceded them, by jumping, howling, hooting and waving a wooden replica sword to ridicule the warrior dance of the men. The dancers also parodied each other's movements and the dance became steadily more rowdy, eventually leading to the watching tourists being invited to join in.

The mask dancers were paid $4 MYR each and each dancer retained the fee. No *bilik* roster system existed for the selection of mask dancers as it was only performed when longhouse residents decided to put on extra entertainment for a special occasion or if a tour guide specifically requested it. Stamang was the only longhouse where I witnessed the mask dance being performed for tourists.

On a few occasions, the mask dance ended with the tourists and a number of longhouse residents, grabbing each other around the waist, and forming a human chain that danced around the longhouse. This last part of the dance has no basis in traditional Iban dance and most closely resembled 'the Conga', an American dance style that originated in the 1940s and was made famous by the singer Carmen Miranda. Tourists always participated eagerly in the 'Conga' dance and it was obvious that, in addition to drinking *tuak* and getting slightly drunk, this part of the evening was an activity that both tourists and longhouse residents enjoyed. According to Tuai Rumah, it had been introduced to the longhouse by tourists. It was unclear whether tourists did so in an attempt to reciprocate a 'tribal' style of dance, or because, the Conga is a well-known, 'feel good' party dance practiced widely in Western culture.

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weekend) and it was on these nights that the mask dance, a favourite with longhouse children and teenagers because it involves parodying traditional dance styles, was performed.

[45] The mask dance was also performed on the free promotional tours offered by AOS for travel writers, to enhance the evening entertainment. No head tax was charged by residents on such tours as AOS and residents agreed that free promotion was a necessary part of business.

When the 'traditional' dance demonstration concluded (on nights when the mask dance was not performed) tourists were invited to dance by residents. Longhouse residents explained to me that, although this part of the evening was provided as part of the scheduled entertainment, it followed longhouse custom in which guests were expected to try and dance in order to show respect for their hosts.[46] At Stamang, tourists were invited to dance one by one by a resident placing Tuai Rumah's headdress on their heads. The musicians resumed playing, the crowd cheered, and residents and the tour guide gestured to the tourist that he or she should get up and try to dance 'Iban style'. Occasionally, in addition to wearing Tuai Rumah's headdress, male tourists would be pressed by the crowd to put on a loincloth, necklace, and ceremonial jacket (Figure 27).[47]

Figure 27: Tourist performing dance at Stamang longhouse.

On some nights, after a few tourists had danced for the crowd, depending on the mood of residents, more rice wine would be passed around and tourists would be invited to try their luck at arm or leg wrestling with residents and to share any entertaining 'tricks' they knew, such as rope tricks, card tricks, matchstick puzzles or coin-tossing.[48] Residents explained that this way of entertaining guests was a long-established Iban custom, and, indeed, I found it to be the case when I travelled to other longhouses not involved with tourism. However, Stamang was the only longhouse where I witnessed

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[46] Travel accounts, such as those by Linklater (1990) and O'Hanlon (1994), remark on this tradition and it is an established part of the longhouse tour itinerary, referred to in brochures as well as by guides when the tour group is en route to the longhouse.

[47] As the costume worn by female dancers was difficult and time consuming to put on, female tourists were only asked to put on Tuai Rumah's headdress.

[48] On other nights, the evening entertainment would wind down at this point and residents would chat politely (with the tour guide translating) until the tourists retired to bed.

residents inviting tourists to play games and, in every other tourist longhouse, a 'night market' followed directly after the dance performance. Generally, after residents and tourists had exchanged 'tricks' for around half an hour the evening drew to a close. Residents began excusing themselves to go to bed and tourists followed suit. At Stamang it was only on rare occasions (usually dependent on the amount of alcohol provided by the group as a gift) that residents continued entertaining tourists with games. The longhouse did not charge a fee for the games activities.

I suspect that Stamang residents were more willing to put in additional effort when entertaining tourists than other tourist longhouse communities because their experience of tourism was relatively new.[49] This suggestion is supported by my observations when visiting tourist longhouses that had been involved with tourism for longer periods. In these longhouses the length and quality of the dance performance and the willingness of residents to linger and chat with tourists afterwards was noticeably diminished. This was a topic of concern among longhouse tour operators (and others in the Sarawak travel industry), who, in interviews and informal discussions, suggested that the 'longhouse product' was 'deteriorating' because the standard of entertainment and hospitality provided by longhouse residents was declining.[50] The usual explanation provided by tour operators and others was that longhouse communities eventually became 'spoiled' by long-term exposure to tourism, ultimately losing the ability to provide genuine (or authentic), 'traditional' hospitality. For example, in one manager's view, a 'spoiled community' meant residents had become focussed on business and profit and lost their tradition, particularly in relation to hospitality (as noted in Chapter Three, this is a view shared by Kedit (1980, 1994) and Hon (1989). However, no serious consideration was given to the idea that communities involved with tourism in the long-term might be gradually becoming more fatigued with providing the established and unchanging industry program of 'hospitality' year after year, for steadily increasing numbers of tourists. Furthermore, what was also disregarded in this view was that the principal reason that longhouse communities elected to become involved with organised tourism was to make a profit.

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[49] As noted previously, tours started to Stamang in 1992, whereas, with the majority of other tourist longhouses, tours had been established for at least 15 years.

In discussions I had with residents of Stamang about how tourism was managed in their longhouse, many felt that they provided a better longhouse tour experience and were astute in business because they were willing to engage with tourists beyond the scheduled entertainment program. However, when I suggested to residents that after 15 or 20 years of tourism they might lack enthusiasm and provide a diminished 'service', like that offered by other long-term tourist longhouse communities, the response was almost without exception in the negative, coupled with the assertion that Stamang residents were by nature more hospitable and more committed to tourism than the members of other longhouses. In other words, they identified inherent hospitality as a defining characteristic of their identity and a point of distinction between themselves and other longhouses. This view echoes the theme of Iban hospitality that is part of the traditional Western view of the Iban and that is repeated in the tour industry sales material.[51]

A further point is that the efforts of the Stamang community in providing spontaneous entertainment for tourists, while not rewarded with payment, were recognised and promoted by AOS as a positive characteristic enhancing the community's attractiveness as a tourist destination. This goes to an issue that Kedit raised in his 1980 study of Skrang River tourism, which was whether the business arrangements of commercial longhouse tourism relied upon or exploited Iban codes of hospitality.

In my view, the relationship between tour operators and longhouse communities is essentially a business relationship but with the complication that the product which longhouse communities are commissioned to provide involves 'traditional hospitality'. For longhouse residents there is no clear separation between codes of hospitality, providing the tour program, and doing business. In my view, this does not mean that longhouse communities are exploited because of their traditions of hospitality or that Iban hospitality in the tourism context is solely about money and business. Instead,

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[50] The Skrang River longhouse communities of Bunu, Murat and Mejong (all of which had been involved with tourism for over 15 years) are the prime examples here.

[51] It is also possible that longstanding inter-longhouse rivalry and competitiveness, a documented facet of Iban society may help explain the unwillingness of Stamang residents to acknowledge the circumstances of other

tourism provides an environment in which the sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting issues of Iban commerce and Iban social codes of behaviour compete and coexist. In this sense, it is ironic that when tour operators speak pejoratively of Iban 'commercialism' they are referring to a perceived decline in Iban hospitality to tourists or to the appearance of business-like behaviour on the part of the Iban in front of tourists. This overlooks the fact that economics is fundamental to the social dynamic that exists between longhouse residents in tourist (and, on occasion, other) longhouses and that they, as tour operators, have helped to create that dynamic in a business setting.

Day activities

Day activities scheduled for tourists varied depending on the length of the tour and the weather. Most tours included the following: a short jungle walk; lunch by the riverbank; a visit to a nearby pepper crop; a blowpipe demonstration; a cockfight; and, occasionally, a visit to a cemetery. As with the night activities, the day activities were staged-for-tourism events based on Iban traditions, and the longhouse charged AOS for each event.

The tourists' day in the longhouse started around 8.00am when their guide called them from the guesthouse to eat breakfast in Tuai Rumah's *bilik*. Breakfast was served in the same fashion as dinner the night before and was prepared and served by the same cooking assistants who had been employed the night before (the $10 MYR paid to the cooking assistants covered dinner, breakfast and lunch). Breakfast, like dinner, was a special meal designed to put tourists at ease. It consisted of scrambled eggs, heated tinned sausages, packaged dry biscuits, tea, coffee and bread. In contrast, the normal Iban breakfast typically consist of leftover cold rice from the previous night's meal and a cup of black tea. Tuai Rumah, like other longhouse residents, would have eaten breakfast at sunrise. However, he would join tourists while they ate to make them feel welcome. The food for breakfast was supplied by AOS and the longhouse supplied tea, coffee and sugar (which was included with the $10 MYR flat meal fee or *beras*).

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communities with a longer involvement in tourism (see Sandin (1967:65,80-89); Sutlive (1978:25-26 and 105-108);

Breakfast usually lasted around 40 minutes. Conversation was frequently minimal, possibly because there was a certain awkwardness in the situation and, often, in my experience, because tourists were too tired to speak, having slept badly due to the change of environment, and having been woken at dawn by cocks crowing.

Jungle walk and blowpipe demonstration

After breakfast the tour group and their guide went for a 'jungle walk' for around one hour through the rice fields, pepper gardens and stands of rubber trees that surround the longhouse.[52] In addition to the guide, tourists were accompanied on the walk by a male longhouse resident. Women were excluded from this job because the walk required a 'warrior' to demonstrate using a blowpipe. In addition to carrying a blowpipe, the 'warrior' was specially dressed in a feathered war bonnet and ceremonial waistcoat (as seen in figure 28). On certain other longhouse tours, depending on the tour company, the local guide was required to wear a loincloth during the jungle walk, although at Stamang this was not the case. For the jungle walk, the local guide was paid $5 MYR (which he retained) and the work was rotated among *bilik*-families using a roster. The local guide was required to direct tourists and their guide around the complicated series of paths that criss-crossed the rice fields and pepper gardens surrounding the longhouse. In addition, he was required to pose for 'jungle' photographs (similar to those found in the marketing material) and, at the completion of the walk, staged a blowpipe demonstration near banana trees behind the longhouse.

During the walk tourists were taken up the hill behind the longhouse and shown some swidden hill rice fields, then followed a path that wound downstream along the river to several pepper gardens. At both locations the tour guide spent several minutes explaining how rice and pepper were grown and harvested, while the longhouse guide assisted by picking pepper and rice and showing it to tourists. Throughout the walk the

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Pringle (1970:21-67) and Freeman (1992)).

[52] While tourists were always eager to go on the jungle walk, many found the short stroll along the well-trodden paths near the longhouse difficult. Many slipped over, while others rapidly became exhausted. As a result, AOS asked longhouse residents to build two small bridges from wood, bamboo and rattan over the little streams that crossed the major pathway behind to the longhouse. In other spots, the company asked for the path to be widened and large rocks to be placed along it as crude paving. The work was performed free of charge by a work party from the longhouse organised by Pengulu Rentap.

longhouse guide pointed out various plant species and explained their traditional use while the tour guide translated. At certain locations on the walk the group passed traps set to catch small animals and the local guide demonstrated how they worked. These traps had, in fact, been specially made by longhouse residents and placed by the path as a feature of the walk, after a request to do so by AOS, although tourists were not informed of this. The finale of the 'jungle walk' was the blowpipe demonstration. This involved the local guide blowing up balloons (supplied by AOS), attaching them to a banana tree, and from a distance of around 15 feet, using the blowpipe to shoot small bamboo darts and pop several balloons. The tourists were invited to try shooting darts from the blowpipe and both guides assisted each tourist with holding and aiming the blowpipe. The jungle walk and blowpipe demonstration were a standard part of tours to all longhouses, although often with other tour companies the blowpipe demonstration was staged next to the guesthouse just prior to tourists departing (Figure 28).

Figure 28: A blowpipe demonstration at Serubah longhouse, Lemanak River, with the guesthouse shown in the background (left) and the longhouse in the background (right). The local guide is shown dressed for a 'jungle walk'.

River trip with lunch

After the blowpipe demonstration the group returned to the longhouse and tourists had half an hour to rest before boarding longboats for the journey up river for a 'traditional Iban lunch' served by the riverbank. The trip upriver varied in time and length, depending on river conditions, but usually lasted around half an hour. Lunch was prepared at a picturesque riverbank location that had been selected by AOS staff when tours first began to Stamang. On average, the longhouse charged approximately $80 to

$120 MYR for the lunch trip, with the fee determined by the distance travelled, the amount of food and fuel consumed and the number of boats required. After covering costs, the remainder of the fee was retained by the boat operators. The longhouse supplied most of the food for lunch, including chicken, rice and vegetables (this was because only a limited amount of food could be brought from Kuching and packed into longboats to bring to the longhouse with each tour group) and AOS suppled bottled water. Most groups required two longboats for the lunch trip. During the river journey the punter/bailer seated at the front of the boat would show tourists the Iban technique of fishing using a throwing net (called *nyala*). A separate $10 MYR fee was charged for this, which was retained by the demonstrator. Any fish or freshwater prawns caught were served with lunch.

The cooking assistants prepared lunch with the help of the boatmen.[53] While lunch was being prepared, the tourists were served rice wine for which the longhouse charged AOS $3 MYR per bottle and the guide described the dishes being prepared and the significance of the cooking method used. Lunch consisted of local rice, store-bought chicken and tinned or freshly-caught fish which had been wrapped in leaves and cooked by being stuffed into three-foot long sections of giant bamboo, which were cut down from the surrounding forest while tourists watched. The bamboo containers were laid across a crudely constructed cooking frame made from cut tree branches and a fire lit underneath to heat the bamboo until the contents were cooked. Tea and coffee were made using the same method of cooking and were served in cups fashioned from the same giant bamboo. Lunch was served on large leaves taken from nearby plants, and tourists ate 'Iban style' using their fingers. In my experience, tourists were less fussy about what they ate at the riverside lunch, possibly because of the barbeque atmosphere, or because the food was not prepared in Tuai Rumah's *bilik*.

At Stamang the trip upriver for lunch was a standard part of the tour program. However, because the lunch trip depended on the weather and river conditions, which could vary considerably, the charge for lunch was not standardised and was left open to negotiation between the boat crew (including driver and punter/bailer) and the guide,

who paid the crew up front in cash. As the fee for lunch was not fixed, this meant boat crews were in a position to bargain with the guide. Only local residents possessed the skill to navigate longboats along the Engkari River and this excluded guides from handling the boats. AOS did not own any longboats and, when it came to bargaining over fuel consumption, most guides did not understand how much fuel the various outboard motors consumed (including in varying river conditions).

There were several strategies used by crews when bargaining. For example, because conditions on the Engkari River upriver from Stamang varied dramatically depending on rainfall, the crew sometimes argued that the current was stronger than normal on that particular day and that a higher payment was required to cover the extra fuel used running against the current. At times this was certainly true, although not always.

Another common occurrence was that a crew would negotiate and receive the fee for the trip on the basis of fuel consumption for a 30 horsepower outboard motor. However, just prior to departing, the engine would develop 'unexpected' mechanical problems and need to be exchanged for a smaller and slower 15 horsepower engine. As the smaller engine uses less fuel, the crew profited by having fuel left over in the tank after the lunch trip. Another strategy to minimise fuel consumption involved travelling halfway to the lunch site at which time the outboard operator would declare that the river was too dangerous to proceed and that lunch should be eaten at the nearest appropriate section of riverbank.

The boat trip to lunch was one aspect of longhouse tourism where residents had considerable bargaining power. Another example was the work of ferrying tourists to and from the Batang Ai jetty to the longhouse (at the beginning and end of the tour). The Stamang community had bargained with AOS that each longboat required cost $50 MYR (which was then split between the crew) and that was in addition to the fuel, which was paid for by the company and negotiated on the same basis as for the lunch

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[53] To my knowledge, no women were ever employed to drive tourist longboats at Stamang or in any other tourist longhouse.

trip.[54] As such, tourist work involving longboats was the only activity for which the fee paid to residents was relatively high.

Cockfight

After lunch, the tour group travelled downriver to the longhouse. Back at the longhouse, tourists usually had about an hour to pack their luggage, take more photographs and purchase handicrafts. They were then told to assemble outside the longhouse at the foot of the stairs where a brief cockfighting demonstration was staged (Figure 29).

Figure 29: Cockfight demonstration for tourists at Stamang longhouse.

The cockfight staged was a simple demonstration and not a blood match, as the cocks did not have the razor sharp metal talons attached to their feet that are used when cockfights are held for gambling and necessary for the birds to fight to the death. The cockfight began when the owner of each bird placed it on the ground in front of the tourists, tugged the feathers on its neck and pushed it towards the other bird. This enticed the birds to fight and was done about three or four times, with the demonstration

[54] An additional benefit stemming from this arrangement was that Stamang residents were able to travel more often to the nearby towns of Lubok Antu and Sri Aman using the bus service that runs from the jetty. For example, residents would catch a ride downriver in a longboat that was on its way to pick up tourists at the jetty and that afternoon or the next day they would catch another ride back to the longhouse when the same or another boat dropped tourists off at the wharf on their way back to Kuching. As AOS paid for the round journey in the longboat, this amounted to a saving of about $90 MYR, which was the approximate cost of the fuel (on average a round tip required six and half

lasting 10 or 15 minutes (depending on the number of photographs taken by tourists). At Stamang residents did not dress in traditional costume for the cockfight, probably because it was the last scheduled activity of the tour and was held a few minutes before the tourists departed. The owner of each bird received $5 MYR and the work was rostered amongst the residents who owned fighting cocks.[55] After the fight (usually around 1pm) the tourists and their guide boarded the longboats waiting for them on the riverbank landing below the longhouse. The tourists travelled downriver and back across the hydroelectric dam to the jetty where their mini van was waiting for them. From the jetty, apart from a brief tea break at Lachau, the tour group travelled directly to Kuching.

Special activities

Periodically, at the request of a tour group or an out-bound travel agency, additional special activities were organised for tourists by AOS and longhouse residents. At Stamang, the most frequent additional activity was jungle trekking, although other special events included a 'headhunter attack' and a 'headhunter wedding'. As these activities were not a regular part of the tour program, and varied depending on requests made by particular tour groups, the fee charged by the longhouse was negotiated on a case-by-case basis with AOS.[56]

The special activities staged at Stamang require description because they demonstrate the high degree to which AOS and the Stamang community were willing to stage events that adhered to traditional themes of wild Borneo and which, I would argue, matched with tourist expectations and fantasies about their trip upriver to a 'remote' longhouse community. In addition, the special activities further demonstrate the commitment and skilful approach of Stamang residents to commercial tourism involving the commodification of Iban culture.

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gallons of fuel). Some Stamang residents remarked to me that they felt less isolated because they were able to travel to town more often.

[55] The cocks used for the demonstration cockfights were proper fighting cocks. Cockfights were often held in the district and many residents kept fighting cocks for this purpose.

Special activities required more planning and coordination between AOS and residents than the normal tour program, especially with big events that necessitated the participation of a large proportion of the longhouse community. Residents were kept informed of any change of plan or tour schedule through messages passed on by AOS guides. Urgent messages were telephoned through to the jetty shop at the hydroelectric dam (the nearest telephone apart from the Hilton) and were passed onto residents when they tied up their boats on their way through to the bus to the town of Lubok Antu.[57] For example, with the 'headhunter attack', which was organised as entertainment for a day trip of approximately one hundred tourists, AOS sent a letter to the longhouse (in Iban) to formally notify residents of the company's plans.[58] In addition, for the 'attack', the branch manager from the Kuching office of AOS personally visited Stamang to hold a community meeting in the *ruai* to discuss the event. At the meeting, a member from every *bilik*-family attended and the fees and organisation of the upcoming event were discussed and agreed.

At Stamang group meetings of *bilik* representatives were standard for the discussion of tourism business so that the voices of individual *bilik*-families could be heard in decision-making that generally required a longhouse-wide communal effort. The meetings were similar to conventional longhouse meetings held to discuss relations between individuals, *bilik*-families and the wider longhouse community (Sutlive 1978:107).[59] In this sense, longhouse-wide meetings to coordinate collective community activity for commercial reasons were an adaptation of conventional

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[56] Although other longhouse communities involved with tourism also staged similar special activities, Stamang was the only longhouse at which I was present during any such activities.

[57] Pengulu Rentap also had an older-style, FM mobile phone that had been supplied to him by AOS for emergencies, but it could not receive calls and it rarely worked to send calls.

[58] The letter was not phrased as a request but was notification of the planned activities and an outline of what was required. An informal part of the business arrangement between AOS and the longhouse at that time was the assumption that residents would participate in special events if they were informed in advance. As residents were always eager to engage in activities that brought more tourists and income to the longhouse, this arrangement worked well.

[59] For example, meetings are commonly held to settle disputes involving breaches of *adat* or, more specifically, to seek community agreement for adoption (Freeman 1992:5,19) and to coordinate longhouse-wide mourning rites (Ngadi 1998:56). Such meetings are formally recognised as part of Iban customary law by the Adat Iban Order 1993.

longhouse custom and an interesting development in longhouse culture relating to tourism.[60]

Jungle trekking

Most jungle trekking with tourists involved a half-day trek to a waterfall, lunch and the return trek to the longhouse. At other times, the trek lasted a full day and tourists camped out overnight and returned the following day. One trek lasted two nights and three days. Tourist jungle treks required considerable organisation, labour and equipment. For example, for an overnight trip with four tourists, porters were required to carry tarpaulins, hammocks, tinned food, bottles of water, soft drink, cooking equipment, cups, plates, bowls and medical supplies, in addition to the backpack and supplies brought by each tourist. Jungle treks required the use of at least two porters employed from the longhouse in addition to the AOS guide who accompanied the group and brought supplies for tourists.

Porters were paid $10 MYR each for a day trek and $15 MYR a day if the work involved sleeping out. As jungle treks were not a regular part of the program and required a one or two day commitment, porters were selected after informal discussion amongst those residents willing to do the work.[61] For meals AOS supplied tinned food and the longhouse supplied consumables such as tea, coffee and rice, charged at a flat rate of $10 MYR per day for the whole group. Any additional costs, such as bottles of rice wine, were charged to AOS.

Occasionally a day-long 'hunting trip' was organised for tourists. Hunting trips followed the same format as day treks with the exception that porters brought along their dogs and guns and attempted to hunt with tourists in tow. 'Hunting trips' were almost always unsuccessful because tourists were unfamiliar with walking in the jungle, which made for slow and uncertain progress (the day became more like a hunting

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[60] Although the meeting at Stamang mentioned above followed the same format as other community meetings held to discuss matters of community significance, residents referred to meetings about tourism as the 'tourism committee' (using the English phrase).

[61] During the rice-harvesting season many residents were preoccupied with their farms and, therefore, the number of residents willing to work as porters for one or two days was not always high.

demonstration than a hunt). The fee for a hunting trip was $10 MYR, which was paid directly to the hunter and hunters were selected on the same basis as porters.

Marriage ceremony - 'headhunter wedding'

Another special activity staged at Stamang was an Iban marriage ceremony, billed by AOS as a 'headhunter wedding'. The ceremony was offered as a special event for any newly-married couples who were willing to pay an additional fee. It held no legal status in Malaysian law (or in Iban customary law) and was provided purely as a special celebration. Only one tourist wedding was staged at Stamang during the year I carried out research, though residents informed me they had staged 'a few' since tours began. The format of the ceremony was based loosely around a 'traditional' Iban wedding, with the notable exception that the slaughter of any large animals (such as pigs) was left out and the celebrations shortened dramatically.

The wedding ceremony was held in the afternoon in the *ruai*. The 'bride' and 'groom' were taken to separate *bilik* and dressed in the 'traditional' costume worn by residents when staging dance performances for tourists.[62] Longhouse residents explained to me that in the past this 'traditional' costume was used for longhouse weddings, however, residents now preferred to wear Western-style wedding attire. In the wedding photographs I saw in many *bilik* at Stamang and other longhouses this was certainly the case.

The format of the wedding ceremony for tourists was similar to many other aspects of the program of longhouse tours in that it focussed on Iban tradition and provided it to tourists to experience as contemporary lived reality. Like other parts of the tourist program, the wedding was a patchwork of custom, contemporary hospitality and invented tradition.

The bride received special attention and a number of women and girls from the longhouse spent a generous amount of time making sure that the bride's hair, makeup,

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[62] See 'Local-born Dutch Lady maries Iban style' in *The Borneo Post* 6 December 1996:8

and costume looked appropriate. The groom dressed in a separate *bilik* with the assistance of several men from the longhouse. The bride and the groom were then brought out from the separate *bilik* (to the cheering of longhouse residents) and sat beside each other in the *ruai* outside Tuai Rumah's *bilik*. As for the dance performance, traditional *pua kumbu* blankets had been hung on the wall of the *ruai* and the bride and groom were posed in front of them while the guide took photographs.

While the bride and groom were seated in the *ruai* Tuai Rumah prepared an offering and blessed them with an offertory similar to that for the welcoming ceremony and a toast was drunk with rice wine. This was the most formal part of the ceremony and could be compared with the saying of vows in a Christian wedding. Nevertheless, the tourist wedding omitted important elements of a traditional Iban wedding, such as the rite that involves enquiring about omens (*nanya ka burong*), the ceremonial fetching of the bride from her father's house to the bridegroom's house and the splitting of the betel nut ceremony for divining the future of the marriage (*melah pinang*) (Gomes 1911:123; Ngadi 1998:24-38).[63]

After the offering dancers performed the usual dance routine and the bride and groom were pressed by residents to dance for the crowd. To further simulate a 'traditional' wedding, each *bilik* supplied a small dish of food (usually rice cakes) and rice wine. AOS provided food in the form of several chickens, tinned meat and biscuits. Following instructions from their guide, the bride and groom contributed one or two cartons of cigarettes and several bottles of store-bought *langkau* (distilled rice wine) to contribute to the festive atmosphere. After the bride and groom had danced, the evening continued until all the food and alcohol had been consumed and people began to retire.

The fee for a wedding was approximately $100 MYR, although this amount varied depending on the amount of food supplied by AOS. Residents had agreed that the fee for hosting a mock wedding was paid to the community fund and, therefore, each *bilik* carried the cost of providing rice cakes, rice wine and other foodstuffs. Staging a wedding for tourists involved the participation of most of the community because a

large number of people were required to generate a festive atmosphere and provide a symbolic amount of food.

In my experience, the 'headhunter' wedding was extremely successful and enjoyed by both tourists and residents. It is likely that residents participated enthusiastically in the knowledge that their efforts were generating profit for the community as a whole. However, I also think that residents enjoyed the spectacle of newlywed tourist couples celebrating their wedding 'Iban style'.

'Headhunter attack'

The two other noteworthy special activities organised by AOS and the residents of Stamang were a simulated 'headhunter attack' and a series of riverside 'Borneo moments'. Both events were organised to enhance the program of large, corporate-incentive groups that visited the longhouse.[64]

The 'headhunter attack' was staged for an incentive group of 98 tourists (including ten guides and two specialist German language guides) from the German company Kleber Tyres. A similar event had been staged in 1994 for another incentive group of 54 tourists from the Dutch company, Falcon Lever Insurance. The Kleber group was the largest group of tourists to visit the longhouse in one day. The group did not stay overnight at Stamang but were accommodated at the Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort and brought up to the longhouse for a day trip.[65]

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[63] Ngadi (1998) provides an excellent summary of the ceremony and rites associated with Iban weddings. See also Sandin (1980).

[64] The term 'incentive tour' is travel industry shorthand for a tour that has been specially organised by a company as an incentive for employees to reach a certain work target, quota, or goal. Incentive tours vary in size from a single employee who has been awarded a package tour as a bonus, through to large groups of several hundred employees. Incentive tours often incorporate teamwork-building activities and training programs as part of the tour and, in fact, a manager from Kleber Tyres (one of the incentive groups) informed me that the trip to Stamang was a 'teamwork' exercise.

[65] The size of these incentive tours and the fact that they were day trips was another notable contrast to the company's claims for the adoption, which as the AOS fact sheet suggested should 'not [be] daily and minimum 2 nights or more'. Furthermore, as the statistics in Chapter Seven demonstrate, short-term tours lasting one night and two days were the most common sorts of tours brought to Stamang.

The logistics of organising such a large number of tourists was considerable. 30 longboats were required to transport the tour group from the Hilton to the longhouse and the boats had to be coordinated to collect the group from the Hilton at the same time and deliver the tourists back to the Hilton at more or less the same time. At Stamang only 15 residents owned outboard motors, so 15 boats (including driver and punter/bailer) had to be hired from other longhouses on the Engkari River.

For AOS, incentive tours were an expansion into corporate-sponsored tourism, a highly profitable area involving large groups of tourists. Furthermore, in the mid 1990s, including a visit to a longhouse as part of an incentive tour was relatively new to the Sarawak travel industry and AOS was keen to establish a reputation as a company that could manage incentive tours and develop a market lead over other rival companies. In addition, the residents of Stamang were aware of the potential for increased profits and they were keen to demonstrate to AOS that the community could handle large, day-visit tour groups. In light of these factors, both AOS and longhouse residents were eager to organise something special for the incentive tour group. During my discussions with residents about the visit of the Kleber group no one suggested that the group should not be hosted, nor did anyone indicate that they had any major reservations about the program. Indeed, the mood in the longhouse was one of genuine excitement about the prospect of hosting such a large number of visitors, coupled with desire to 'do a good job'.

The tour and the attack involved considerable forward planning, including a visit to Stamang by the branch manager to negotiate the fee for the services provided by the longhouse and a longhouse-wide meeting to organise the day, including the division of labour for the various services provided and the style of the attack that would be staged. For this meeting it was necessary to invite residents from other longhouses who were providing additional labour. A few months previously two executive staff from Kleber Tyres had flown by helicopter to the Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort to inspect the facilities and on the same day proceeded by helicopter to Stamang to inspect the

longhouse for half an hour (where they were treated to ten minutes of dancing and some *tuak*).[66]

The program included a large welcoming ceremony and blessing at the longhouse, lunch hosted in the *ruai* and an extended traditional dance display (eight dancers instead of four). The lunch required members from every *bilik* to start preparing food early on the morning of the day trip and *tuak* had to be brewed in advance of the visit (for up to three weeks), as at least 50 bottles were needed. Other preparations included: each boatman carving a wooden flag with a number on it and attaching it to his boat so tourists could identify the boat in which they were travelling; decorating the longhouse with palm fronds and *pua kumbu* to simulate the look of the longhouse during a festival;[67] structural repairs to the *ruai* so that sections did not collapse due to the extra weight of so many tourists; constructing a staircase for tourists adjacent to the *tangga* (traditional entrance ladder) to allow for easier access to the longhouse; and preparations for the offering and welcoming ceremony.

The preparations for receiving the tourists had to be coordinated with the staging of the attack, which meant that almost every able-bodied member of the longhouse was involved with hosting the group. For example, at least 30 men from the longhouse were engaged in fetching tourists from the Hilton (two for each of the 15 boats with outboards that the longhouse was able to supply); a further 35 residents were downriver waiting to stage the attack; around 15 residents were waiting dressed up by the riverbank near the longhouse with *tuak* and gongs 'on standby' for the welcoming ceremony; and a further 50 were preparing food. The commitment required of residents was considerable and disrupted the everyday work patterns of the entire longhouse.

The 'headhunter attack' part of the program was an extreme case of 'fictional wild Borneo as performance': it was not intended that tourists should interpret it as a real attack, and it was not meant to be representative of contemporary reality. At a basic level the attack was a performance piece devised by AOS to surprise tourists. However,

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[66] Pers.comm.Kjartan Eide. Ironically, the only reason the helicopter was able to land at Stamang was because a large area of land behind the longhouse had been cleared to make way for the new longhouse.
[67] For colour images of longhouses decorated in this way see Ngadi (1998) and Wright et al (1982).

it also appealed to European ideas about wild Borneo, particularly about Iban indigenous headhunters and the danger of journeying by river to the 'interior'. The attack was planned, and occurred, as described below.

After picking up the tourists from the Hilton and travelling for about half an hour, the driver of the lead longboat feigned engine failure and brought his boat to rest on the riverbank. As previously arranged, this occurred on a narrow stretch of the river which had a convenient beach-like sand bank and was less than half an hour from the longhouse by boat and foot (which allowed the residents involved in the attack to reach the spot easily). As planned, the driver of the lead boat flagged down the next boat following in the convoy to ask for help and, because of the narrowness of the river at that spot, the following 28 boats were unable to pass and were forced to pull up on the same riverbank. It took about ten minutes for all the boats to pull up and the guides explained to tourists that the lead boat was having 'engine trouble' and that the group would have to wait until the problem was fixed. At this point, several Iban men had joined in the play of 'fixing' the engine of the lead boat.

After a few minutes the attack began and 35 residents from Stamang, some waving bush knives and others aiming blowpipes, came running out of the jungle towards the 'stranded' tourist boats. The attack included both men and women from the longhouse. Some of the men had dressed up in loincloths and some men and women had feathers in their hair, while others had attached bunches of leaves to their clothing in the style of camouflage. At the longhouse meeting held to plan the attack, AOS had suggested that residents 'behave like red Indians' and, following this suggestion, several of the attackers painted 'war paint' on their faces and ran out of the jungle whooping and hooting in the manner of Hollywood 'red Indians'. Indeed, one of the attackers remarked in English to me after the attack 'See, what do you think now? We are just like real Indians!' In the context, the comment was half satirical but it was also a proud statement of the community's ability to successfully perform a 'red Indian' version of wild Iban for tourists, and how enjoyable it was.

AOS had stated a preference for residents with tattoos to be in the attack. However, because many of the men with tattoos were already occupied driving the longboats, only

elderly male residents with tattoos were available. Furthermore, a number of women were recruited for the attack, because the majority of the men were already occupied with the boats or were on 'standby' as part of the welcoming party at the longhouse. As some tourists pointed out, a consequence of this was that the attack lacked some of its planned dramatic ferocity.

Following a direction from AOS, after running from the jungle whooping, several of the attackers approached the tourist longboats and pretended to hack with their bush knives at the gunwale of several boats. However, AOS had cautioned the attackers in not being too 'fierce', and the emphasis was on making the attack theatrically exciting but not too realistic or confronting for tourists. This was because during the previous attack staged for an incentive group a tourist, not realising that the attack was a show, had developed chest pains from fright.

The attackers then ran around the boats whooping for a few minutes, until it was obvious that the dramatic effect had passed, when they proceeded to shake hands with the tourists and the guides arranged for the attackers to pose for photographs with tourists. The attackers walked back to the longhouse to join in the festivities when the tourists arrived.

An interesting event I witnessed during the attack was two tourists who leapt from their boat and greeted the attackers by mimicking the Hollywood 'red Indian' whooping of the attackers. Then, later on in the day, during the tourist section of the Iban dance performance, a spontaneous 'conga' line formed involving at least 30 tourists and several longhouse residents. As the conga made its way around the *ruai* several tourists began to whoop and hoot as they had seen the attackers do earlier in the day. The assembled Iban and tourists began to do the same. For a moment the entire longhouse - tourists and Iban - were united in performing 'wild Borneo' by pretending to be Hollywood 'red Indians'.

The nature of the attack made it obvious that after the intial moment of surprise it was not intended that tourists should interpret it as a real moment of ferocity by 'savage' Iban. The attack was staged in a way that invited tourists to make-believe that the Iban

were unchanged wild people defending their territory from colonial adventurers and to enjoy it as an entertaining spectacle. Although the attack was obviously a stunt it was a successful addition to the itinerary because it played to known wild Borneo themes.

After the attack the tourists continued up river to Stamang where a welcoming ceremony (including an offering) was staged, following the usual format, although on a grander scale. The usual dance performance was also staged, lunch was served in the *ruai* and a constant supply of *tuak* was on hand. Some time was allocated for the group to wander around and take photographs and buy handicrafts before departing. Unexpectedly, many of the tourists did not eat the food prepared for lunch because the longhouse was not able to supply sufficient cutlery for all of them and most were unwilling to eat with their fingers.

After visiting the longhouse the tourists returned to the Hilton and a party was staged. For the party the longboat crews who ferried the tourists to the Hilton were paid to stage a further traditional dance performance and to provide music. In addition, a headhunter wedding was staged for a tourist couple on the lawn of the Hilton overlooking the hydroelectric lake. Because of the large number of tourists involved, an extra theatrical element was added to the wedding involving the bride and groom arriving in longboats lit up with flaming torches from a point across the lake. The bride and groom were dressed in the usual ceremonial costume, though the groom's beaded necklace had been substituted with a necklace made of small, plastic, glow-in-the-dark skulls of the kind commonly found in toy stores or shops selling costume accessories. The longhouse residents involved were asked to wear 'traditional' costume throughout the evening (see Figure 30).

Figure 30: (Previous page). Top left, scene of the attack with tourist longboats pulled up on riverbank. Top right, Stamang residents (Pengulu on left) dressed up for party at Hilton after returning tourists to Hilton (see later). Bottom right, preparing to pick up tourists from Hilton prior to attack. Bottom left, two 'attackers' returning by boat to Stamang.

Overall, the day was considered a success by all involved and AOS received positive feedback from the tour group. The residents of Stamang commented that the exercise was enjoyable and profitable and AOS congratulated residents on their skill in handling a large group or tourists.

For the day's activities, the longhouse billed AOS the considerable sum of $12,000 MYR, including expenses and wages, which AOS paid promptly in cash. This figure was accounted for as follows:

In head tax, the longhouse received $480 MYR paid to the longhouse fund (because of the large number of tourists AOS had negotiated a reduced head tax of $5 MYR per tourist). Each attacker was paid $15 MYR and each longboat received the usual fee of $50 MYR, split between the driver and the punter/bailer. Fuel costs were also paid. I was informed by AOS that approximately $8,000 MYR was spent on longboat transportation costs, including fuel and wages. Some of this would have gone to longboat crews from other longhouses, although the majority went to Stamang. For the welcoming ceremony the longhouse charged $300 MYR, which was paid into the community fund, while the dancers and gong players were paid the usual fee (accounting for $96 MYR).

I was not able to determine precisely how the remaining $3,124 MYR was charged and divided up, although residents explained that it was mainly used to pay the cooking assistants and to cover food and fuel costs. Some of it would have gone towards paying residents for their work at the Hilton party. I would estimate that each *bilik*-family received approximately $40 MYR for cooking and expenses and 15 *bilik*-families received an additional $50 MYR in boatman's fees. Including handicrafts sold, a reasonable estimate is that every *bilik*-family received around $90 MYR for the day

which, when considered in addition to the payments made to the longhouse fund, amounted to a significant profit for the community.[68]

Borneo moments

The second incentive group that visited Stamang while I was resident there was from the German office of the car company Opel. The group consisted of four separate contingents of tourists who visited the longhouse on four separate day trips. Each group stayed at the Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort and was brought to Stamang for the day in longboats provided by residents. The first visit involved 52 tourists, the second 57 tourists, the third 54 tourists and the fourth 55 tourists. The groups arrived approximately every three days and each was looked after by three guides. The program for the groups did not involve any staged 'attacks' by Stamang residents, but included other special staged events. In addition to revealing the profit and high-level organisation involved in large incentive tours, it demonstrates the extent to which AOS, with the cooperation of longhouse residents, devised and staged a simulated 'wild Borneo' experience for tourists.

The major part of the program for the Opel groups was essentially the same as that provided for the Kleber group. For example, each group arrived at the longhouse and was greeted by the welcoming ceremony and offering. Similarly, each group was provided with lunch in the *ruai* and watched and participated in a dance performance. Where the Opel program differed from that provided to the Kleber group was that various 'Borneo moments' were staged for tourists to witness from the longboats as they travelled upriver from the Hilton to Stamang (see Figure 31). Importantly, each 'moment' was not intended to be understood by tourists as staged theatre but as the 'authentic' life of longhouse communities. Tourists were not informed that what they saw as they travelled upriver involved paid Iban actors.

The first 'Borneo moment' occurred shortly after tourists left the Hilton when, after crossing the hydroelectric lake for around 15 minutes in longboats, the boats rounded a

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[68] I was not able to find out how much AOS charged the Kleber group for the incentive tour.

bend where a floating fish farm came into view. The farm was run by residents from a nearby longhouse and consisted of a small wooden shack with a thatched roof, several floating logs and a series of nets that formed cages for fish. Floating on the lake on its own against the backdrop of distant hills, the farm presented a picturesque scene and, on other tours, when tourists passed by it in longboats, it was common for them to photograph it. For the Opel groups, AOS had arranged for a resident from a nearby longhouse to be on 'standby' tending to the nets so that guides could 'spontaneously' decide to stop and purchase some fish for lunch for the tour group and allow the tourists to get a close-up look at the farm.

The second event occurred after about another 15 minutes as the tourist longboats passed Spaya longhouse. Spaya is situated on the left bank of the Engkari River (heading upriver) and was also involved with longhouse tourism, although primarily with another longhouse tour company.[69] At Spaya AOS had employed ten women to be ready with a basket of clothes and when the tourist longboats approached they began to wash the clothes in the river. For this task, the women were asked to wear sarongs (they were not expected to show their breasts) and large, hand-crafted sun hats (commonly worn when working outside in the heat). In addition, several naked children were requested to be 'on standby' and as the boats approached the washerwomen signalled for them to jump in the river and begin playing. As the tourists passed they took numerous photographs and the washerwomen and children waved.

The next event occurred about five minutes after the tourist boats had passed Spaya longhouse. AOS had arranged for a group of four Iban men from Stamang dressed only in shorts (so their tattoos were visible) to be squatting on the riverbank by a fire having a barbeque, roasting fish and chicken and drinking *tuak*. According to the program, as the boats approached, the Iban men gestured for the tourists to join them and a 'spontaneous' barbeque and tuak drinking session was held by the riverbank. To provide extra food for the tourists the guides offered the fresh fish purchased downriver at the fish farm. After around half an hour of drinking and eating by the riverbank the guides excused the group and the tour proceeded upriver.

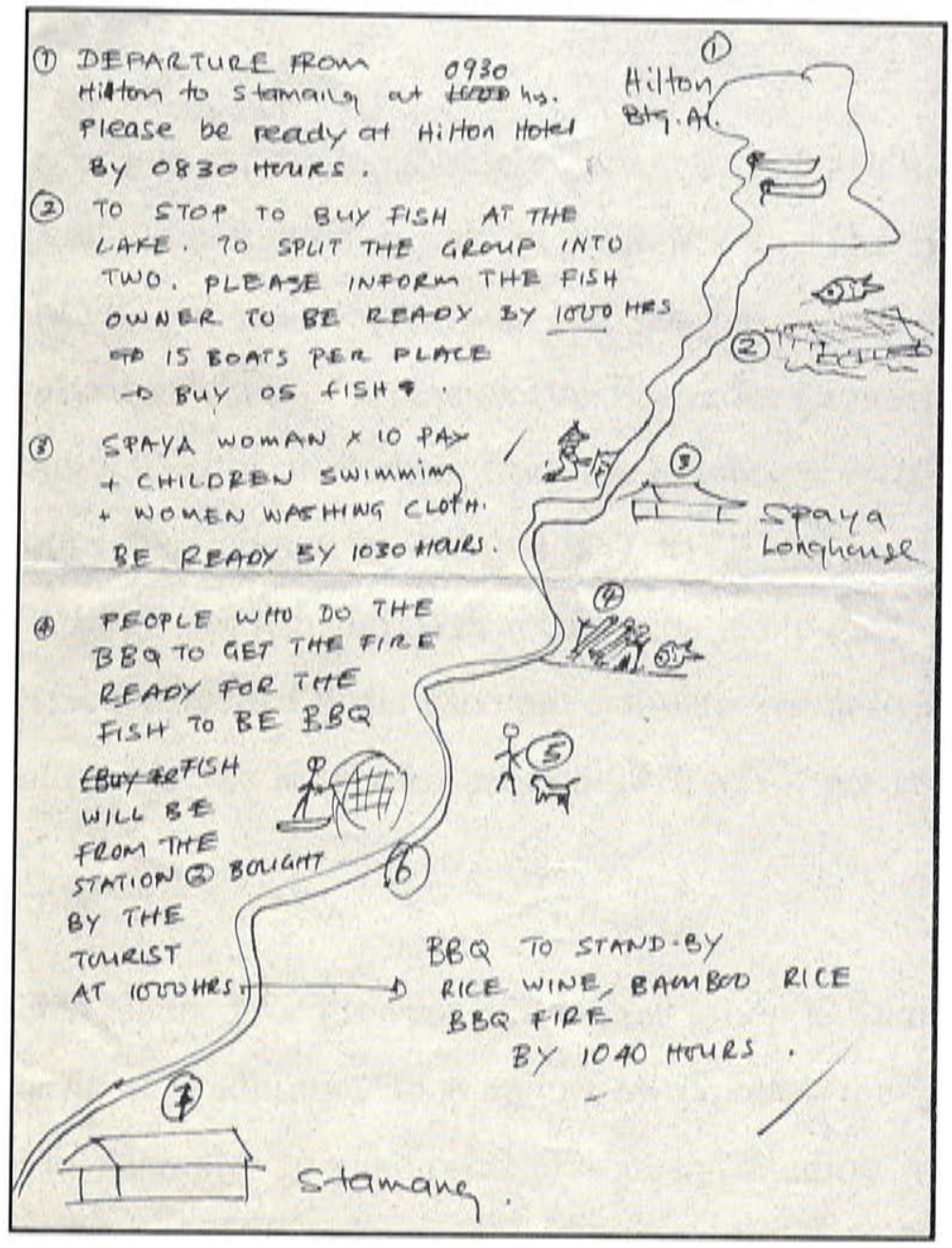

Figure 31: Hand-drawn instructions from AOS supplied to Stamang for Opel tour program.

The next staged moment occurred shortly after the barbeque, about ten minutes further upriver. As the tourist boats rounded another bend, three Iban men from Stamang dressed in shorts and feathered headdresses, carrying blowpipes, and accompanied by hunting dogs, came into view resting on a raised grassy patch of land just above the riverbank. The guides explained to the tourists that they were passing a 'hunting party' resting by the riverbank as it returned to the longhouse.

The final staged moment of the river journey occurred on the last bend of the river before the longhouse and involved a sole Iban man fishing with a throwing net. As the tourist longboats came into view, the fisherman began casting his net on the river. The

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[69] AOS occasionally brought tours to Spaya if conditions on the Engkari River meant that Stamang could not be reached.

fisherman was required to fish from a boat without an outboard motor and AOS requested a preference for a fisherman with traditional tattoos and wearing only shorts.

For the four groups of tourists the longhouse received $1,090 MYR in head tax and the four welcoming ceremonies netted a further $480 MYR. The river activities were charged at $380 MYR for each tour group and the fee was distributed among the various actors involved (including a payment to Spaya longhouse). In addition, each group required around 30 kitchen workers from the longhouse hired at $10 MYR each. Over the four groups the longhouse charged $57 MYR for cooking oils and small foodstuffs and $695 MYR for fish and other meats supplied to the tourists. I was unable to find out the precise number of boats used but estimate that at least 15 were required, making the amount paid to the longhouse around $750 MYR per group (excluding fuel reimbursements).

The Borneo moments planned for the visit of the Opel group to Stamang are an extreme example of the staging of 'traditional' Iban culture to provide a tour product that appeals to wild Borneo. For example, as mentioned previously, hunting with blowpipes is no longer practiced in Iban longhouse communities but hunting using guns is common.[70] In addition, the Opel program demonstrates the commitment of the residents of Stamang to tourism business and their knowing participation in events that fabricate contemporary Borneo as wild Borneo. For the Opel program the choice was made to include a scene of a hunting party returning to the longhouse, which is an everyday occurrence in present-day longhouse communities, yet the hunters were asked to carry blowpipes instead of guns, while for the fishing scene, which is also an everyday practice in longhouse communities, the fishing boat had its outboard motor removed. The Opel program also shows the familiarity and skill of AOS with wild Borneo themes, particularly the significance of Borneo experienced visually – as photographs or cinema – and the need to enhance that element of a tour with limited, staged interaction between tourists and Iban. Finally, the Opel program illustrates that wildness has become an artefact and commodity of modernity, including tour products that involve

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[70] Hunting guns have been common in Iban communities since before World War II. For example, Reece notes in his discussion of the Japanese occupation of Sarawak that the main source of antagonism between the Japanese and Iban was an 'attempt to take away their hunting guns' (Reece 1993:149).

knowing games about the nature of the wild being played and participated in by tour operators, tourists and the Iban.

Handicrafts

In all tourist longhouse communities other than Stamang, the sale of handicrafts at a 'night market' formed an important part of the tourist program (Figure 32). For longhouse residents, the sale of handicrafts was the only other source of cash earnings from tourism apart from wages paid by tour companies. Handicrafts were sold in all tourist longhouses (including Stamang, although not at a night market) and comprised items manufactured by residents from local materials such as wood and rattan (for example, carvings), items manufactured by residents from store-bought materials (for example, *pua kumbu*) and store-bought items that were resold to tourists at marked up prices (for example, knives and swords). All tourist longhouses sold a combination of these things, although the use of store-bought items for resale was higher at Skrang River longhouses, particularly Bunu longhouse, which was the closest longhouse to the store at the Pias landing jetty.

In most tourist longhouses the night market was held by residents in the *ruai* directly after the dance performance. This involved residents returning to their *bilik* after the performance to fetch handicrafts, which they then displayed by laying them out on the section of the *ruai* corresponding to their *bilik*. Tourists were encouraged by their guide to stroll along the *ruai,* 'shopping' for any handicrafts that interested them. No price tags were displayed and tourists bargained for a price, usually with the assistance of their guide.[71] To my knowledge there was never any suggestion in any tourist longhouse that handicrafts be sold through a longhouse community shop and for any income derived from it to be distributed to constituent *bilik*-families. Instead, the common practice was that *bilik*-families were responsible for their own handicraft production, sales and profit.

However, at Stamang AOS requested that residents display handcrafts at all times during the tourists' visit, so that the tourists could view and potentially purchase handicrafts at any time. This method of selling had two advantages. First, it allowed for a more flexible approach to the evening entertainment program, because there was no need for a 'night market'. Secondly, it enabled AOS to identify its tours (and the Stamang community) as less 'commercial' than their competitors, especially as tourists with other companies had complained that longhouse residents were 'too pushy' during the night markets ,'too commercialised' and 'not authentic'.

Accordingly, at Stamang the handicrafts were hung from the outside wall of *bilik* with hand-written price tags attached to them so that tourists could make a decision to purchase something without having to ask for a price. AOS believed that displaying items with price tags would further ameliorate criticisms from tourists about the commercial nature of the handicrafts. While the idea of a price tag system is, arguably, a more obvious indiction that it is for sale as a commodity, AOS's approach appears to have been successful, because tourists enjoyed browsing over handicrafts at their leisure and did not complain that price tags were inauthentic. It also meant that bargaining for handicrafts was less complicated and some tourists paid the displayed price without bargaining at all.

Figure 32: 'Night market' at Bunu longhouse, Skrang River.

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[71] An example of the handicrafts for sale to tourists is provided in Table 1 below, which lists the handicrafts for sale at Stamang.

Although handicraft sales afforded residents additional income, sales occurred infrequently and were distributed unevenly among *bilik*-families depending on the purchasing preference of tourists on any particular night. Profit from the sale of handicrafts varied considerably. For example, a *bilik*-family might make a small profit (say $15 MYR) from the sale of a wooden ashtray carved with little effort, or sell for several hundred ringgit a large *pua kumbu* that was the result of months of intermittent labour using a loom. At other times, *bilik*-families were lucky and made a large profit when tourists purchased store-bought items that had been marked up 200%.

At Stamang and other tourist longhouses I observed that tourists purchased small, cheap items on almost every tour. However, because not all tourists in each group would buy something and the tour groups were not large, only one or two items were bought on each tour. The sale of large, expensive items was rare.[72]

My observation was that *bilik*-family earnings from the sale of handicrafts were not high. In addition, because sales were distributed randomly, some *bilik*-families profited while others did not, although the possibility of a large sale ensured that most residents were always trying to sell something. Overall, in the nine month period in which I was regularly at Stamang longhouse, I observed that most of the handicraft 'stock' on display was not sold quickly and most was not sold at all.[73] Thus, while the sale of handicrafts provided some income for *bilik*-families, and was a significant element of the commercial structure of the tour program, the income produced was not regular or significant.

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[72] One factor that I would suggest may reduce longhouse handicraft sales is the abundance of handicraft stores near Kuching's waterfront on Jalan Main Bazaar, as well as shops situated in places such as the lobbies of the Kuching Hilton and the Holiday Inn (see Chapter Five).

[73] The exception was the incentive visits where the presence of such large numbers of tourists resulted in increased sales.

Item*	Price in $MYR	Item	Price
Short necklace made from seed pods	$6	Rattan fish trap	$20
Long necklace made from seed pods	$11	Small bird carving	$10
Carved wooden mask	$30	Small plastic bag of green pepper	$5
Small hand woven basket	$13	Small plastic bag of black pepper	$5
Large hand woven basket	$35	Small carved wooden turtle	$16
Extra large basket for carrying sacks of rice	$100	Small caved wooden crocodile	$16
Small wooden carving of man shooting a blowpipe	$20	Small carved elephant	$14
Small wooden spinning top	$10	Offering baskets	$5
Small store-bought replica blow pipe with dart holder	$30	Small gourd	$5
Small wooden drum	$50	Large longhouse-made *pua kumbu* (of poor quality)**	$200
Small store-bought weaving (Indonesian)	$20	Carved wooden tobacco container	$15
Carved wooden ash tray	$15	Carved wooden paddle	$15
Large mat	$60	Small replica hand painted shield	$10
Wooden handled bush knife with carved wooden sheath	$30	Child's wooden toy boat	$30
Dibble for planting rice	$30	Copper bracelet	$3
Woven hornbill design place mats made from dried palm leaf	$10		

Table 1: Type and price of handicrafts for sale at Stamang longhouse.

* Unless stated all handicrafts were made by longhouse residents. ** Usually only poor quality *pua kumbu* were sold because they could be produced quickly and tourists were not discerning buyers. Longhouse residents in Sarawak have traded *pua kumbu* for centuries, particularly to Chinese merchants, and residents are aware of the value of older, usually better quality, pieces, which they often retain as heirloom items, for ritual use if *bilik* members follow Iban cosmology and as an item of high value to sell in times of need.

Earnings from tourism

To conclude this chapter the following section provides a broad overview of the financial benefits to residents generated by their involvement with longhouse tourism. The section summarises my understanding of the earnings derived from tourism by longhouse communities, *bilik*-families and individual residents, calculated by reference to the activities outlined in earlier sections of the chapter.

However, at the outset, it should be noted that calculating earnings from tourism for *bilik*-families, or on a longhouse-wide basis, was difficult for several reasons:

Firstly, in my observation, there was significant social pressure on individual community members within a longhouse, and in each longhouse community as a whole,

not to display material success or wealth in an outward or boastful manner, including engaging in any open discussions about money. For example, at Stamang residents often accused each other (as well as the residents of other communities) of being conceited (*sumbong*) because their *bilik* (or longhouse) showed outward signs of material wealth (such as a new roof, extensive paving, a new generator, a television or a new outboard motor).

Furthermore, because longhouse tourism involves the movement of relatively large sums of money through a longhouse, in my observation, this contributed towards a general reticence among residents to discuss income and other tourism-related money matters. This reflects a feature of Iban society in which individuals try not to stand out from the crowd or to be identified as too wealthy, as this often leads to accusations of the negative character trait '*rangka*' (meaning 'greedy' or 'selfish').[74] As Sutlive, speaking in relation to longhouse festivals, notes:

> Pressures to make everything and everyone equal, or nearly so, have been important in the *gawai* or festival system. Of him to whom much has been given has much been required...distribution, not retention, is virtuous.
>
> The Commandment , "Thou shalt succeed," is tempered with the qualification, "but not too much". Understandably, therefore, the Iban can be both proud and humble, confident and uncertain, self-asserting and self-effacing (Sutlive 1978:109-110).

However, in contrast, as Sutlive (1978), Jensen (1974), Pringle (1970), Rousseau (1980), Freeman (1981, 1992) and Jawan (1994) have noted, competitiveness between individuals, *bilik*-families and longhouse communities is also a feature of Iban society and it is usually twinned with a desire to achieve high status and wealth. For example, the titles Tau Serang (war leader - in a historical context), Tuai Burong (ritual or spiritual leader), Tuai Rumah (head person, longhouse leader) and Pengulu (river leader) represent different kinds of status and achievement amongst Iban (Pringle 1970:32-33; Freeman 1992:109-117).[75]

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[74] For example, at the Iban cultural seminar held in Sri Aman in 1993, Datuk Celestine Ujang ak Jilan noted in relation to selling and business practices, 'the act of selling if it occurs, especially between one Iban and another, is generally frowned up [sic] by society...A man who sells goods to another is generally regarded as "rangka" and "mean"' (Jilan 1993:16).

[75] A further point is that at Stamang there was implicit acknowledgment among community members that Tuai Rumah Sunok and Pengulu Rentap's positions were linked to and rewarded by comparably greater wealth than other *bilik*-families within the longhouse, which included receiving a greater share of the income from tourism. This was also the case for *Tuai Rumah* in the Skrang River tourist longhouses Mejong and Murat. This observation raises

Secondly, at Stamang (and in tourist longhouses generally) business arrangements between the community, individuals or *bilik*-families and the tour company were sensitive matters. In my view this was primarily because residents wanted to protect the market position of the longhouse as well as their *bilik*-family against trade from competing tourist longhouses.[76] Therefore, they were cautious about revealing anything that might jeopardise the community's relationship with the company or, in the case of individuals, their standing in the community vis-à-vis the company and with each other. Competition with other longhouse communities (which was signalled when residents spoke disparagingly of the behaviour of other tourist longhouse communities towards tourists and the quality of dance and other performance provided) emphasises the importance residents place on both their relationship with longhouse tour companies as business providers (and partners) and tourists as important paying guests.

Moreover, at least at Stamang, it was apparent to me that residents did not want other longhouse communities (including those involved and not involved with tourism) to know how much they were earning. Consequently, open discussion with longhouse residents about more than the basic fee structure and method for distributing earnings from tourism was difficult.[77]

Finally, at Stamang handicrafts were sold intermittently to tourists at any time during their stay. This made recording every transaction and calculating the precise cash amount earned by each *bilik*-family from handicrafts sales difficult and imprecise.

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questions about Freeman's view that Iban society is classless and egalitarian and ties in with Rousseau's contention that Iban society, while having a strong egalitarian slant and not formally hierarchical, is clearly socially differentiated on the basis of prestige, influence, authority and wealth and that those *bilik*-families with influence and wealth actively maintain their position and achieve *de facto* hereditary status within communities (Freeman 1981, 1992; Rousseau 1980). At Stamang, while Tuai Rumah and Pengulu were more involved in the day-to-day running of the tourism business than other *bilik*-families (therefore perhaps justifying to a certain extent better remuneration), I would suggest that the community allowed them to access more income from tourism partly in recognition of their status, influence and prestige, an action that, in turn, assisted them to maintain their individual and *bilik*-family's position within the community (Jawan 1994:46-49).

[76] Refer to footnote 33, Chapter Seven.

[77] As mentioned in Chapter Two, at Stamang I was fortunate enough to be allowed access to some of the account books and I was also provided with assistance from AOS. In other tourist longhouses my enquiries about cash flow and accounts were mostly limited to crosschecking the fee structure with the basic program for tourism.

In spite of these hindrances, some significant observations about the basic economics of longhouse tourism can be provided. First, it can be said that longhouse tourism at Stamang dramatically increased cash flow to and within the community. At Stamang, over a nine-month period, from October 1995 to June 1996, there were 82 tours, for which the longhouse invoiced AOS $95,396.90 MYR in charges. Tours and tourist numbers to Stamang were peaking at this time. Nevertheless, based on figures supplied by AOS (see Chapter Seven), the number of tours and tourists to Stamang had not dropped below three quarters of the above figure in the two preceding years.[78] Calculated on that basis, the cash flow at Stamang from tourism (excluding the sale of handicrafts) averaged around $70,000 MYR per annum from 1993 to 1996. While this figure does not translate to earnings, it clearly demonstrates that longhouse tourism, seen as a community-wide enterprise was not a minor business matter for the Stamang community.

Furthermore, while Stamang was a popular tourist longhouse, it was not the busiest tourist longhouse in Sarawak. Other more established longhouses, such as Mejong and Murat on the Skrang River, received tour groups more frequently and, while I was not privy to their accounts, I would suggest that both had an annual cash flow of approximately $100,000 MYR (excluding handicrafts).

As mentioned earlier, at Stamang the fees and charges generating income were structured so that some funds were paid into a longhouse fund to be used for community purposes, while other payments were made to individuals. I estimate that approximately 10% ($7,000 MYR) of the cash flow generated from tourism was retained as profit and placed in the community fund. As with many businesses, the greatest proportion of cash flow was generated in the process of covering costs. At Stamang the largest proportion was for payment of fuel used in transporting tourists to the longhouse, preparing meals (gas for cooking) and running the generator to provide electric lighting for the dance performances. I was unable to ascertain the exact amount held in the longhouse community fund, or the amount the fund received over the life of

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[78] The figure for 1992 (the first year the longhouse was involved with tourism) was not made available by AOS, although residents informed me that that tourist numbers were, comparatively, quite low, as the business was only in its initial stages.

the community's involvement with tourism, although several residents commented while I was resident at Stamang that the amount in the fund at that time was around $90,000 MYR. This included monies paid to the longhouse by a logging company as compensation for timber extraction from customary-owned land. Based on the figure of $7,000 MYR per annum I would suggest that the amount in the fund stemming from tourism was approximately $35,000 MYR. Some of this money was occasionally used to assist residents with funeral expenses, while the majority was later spent on materials used in the construction of a new longhouse

As I have already mentioned, the fee and charge structure was more or less the same in all tourist longhouses, with minor differences in the distribution of funds.[79] This was because tour operators offered longhouse communities more or less the same terms of involvement across the industry and communities lacked the capacity to negotiate different fees and charges. As the thesis demonstrates, one reason for this is that longhouse communities do not become independently involved in organised tourism. Instead, tour operators select the communities they feel are most appropriate. Generally, the communities chosen are those that are poor and remote and, if residents decide to become involved with tourism, they must accept the business terms offered by the operator.

As mentioned previously, the amount that individual *bilik*-families received from tourism is extremely difficult to calculate. At Stamang I interviewed residents privately about their earnings. The unanimous response was that they did not earn enough.[80] More specifically, I was advised that yearly earnings for each *bilik*-family varied on a scale of between $200 and $800 MYR, including sales from handicrafts. These generally low amounts are attributable to the fact that tourism work was divided up and

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[79] For example, some communities retained more for the community fund (as with Nanga Sumpa on the Ulu Ai River), while other communities paid more in cash directly to residents (as with Nanga Kasit Ulu on the Engkari River).

[80] This could also be seen as somewhat strategic because, like any work force involved in ongoing industrial negotiation, the assertion that earnings are low is a necessary precursor to soliciting for higher wages. In fact, many residents were quite upfront with this aim and asked me to report to the Malaysian Government that wages for tourism work were low and that the government should act to see wages increased. As mentioned in Chapter Three, during Kedit's fieldwork in Skrang River tourist longhouse communities in the years 1975, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992 he was told on each occasion by residents that wages for tourism work were too low and in urgent need of review (Kedit 1980, 1994). It is likely that there was also some strategy in the comments made to Kedit. A notable

distributed amongst the member *bilik*-families using a roster and, while tours to Stamang were quite regular (see Chapter Seven), the volume was not enough to ensure that each *bilik*-family was rostered on often enough to make high earnings. The variation in the amounts quoted by individual *bilik*-families is explained by the fact that, in my observation, *bilik*-families differed in their capacity to earn from tourism. For example, the fee charged for transferring a tour group to and from the longhouse by longboat was $50 MYR but only 15 of the 36 *bilik*-families in Stamang could supply a longboat with an outboard motor for this purpose.[81] Therefore, work and income from this service was rotated through only those 15 *bilik*-families. Luck with handicraft sales was another factor.

In addition, at Stamang Tuai Rumah Sunok and Pengulu Rentap received an extra flat fee from AOS for their assistance in managing the longhouse's involvement in tourism. I was unable to determine the precise amount of these payments, although based on my understanding of payments made to *Tuai Rumah* in other tourist longhouses, the figure would have been unlikely to be more than $200 MYR per annum. In addition, at Stamang Tuai Rumah received a $10 MYR payment, or group tax, for every tour group through the longhouse. Based on an average of 80 tour groups per year to Stamang this earned Tuai Rumah an additional $800 MYR per annum, making his family's direct income from tourism at least twice that of other *bilik*-families. However, it should be noted that Tuai Rumah and Tuai Rumah's *bilik*-family spent more time than any other *bilik*-family hosting tourists, including the fact that Tuai Rumah was always on hand to greet tourists by the riverbank and he and his *bilik*-family hosted dinner and breakfast roughly twice a week. Even so, as noted earlier, one way in which the status of Tuai Rumah and Pengulu was acknowledged in the community was by acceptance of the higher income that their *bilik*-families received from longhouse tourism.

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recommendation of Kedit's 1980 report to the Sarawak State Government was that steps should be taken to increase wages for longhouse residents performing tourism work (Kedit 1980: 26-28).

[81] In 1993 (the first year of regular tours) AOS purchased four new 25-horsepower outboard motors and sold them at a subsidised rate to four residents who had the available funds. The rationale was that the company needed a pool of reliable engines for use in ferrying tourists to and from the longhouse and suppling outboard motors to longhouse residents at a subsidised price was more cost-effective than purchasing, maintaining and mooring company-owned boats at the Batang Ai hydroelectric dam jetty. One outcome of this initiative was that the four *bilik*-families that were wealthy enough to purchase the engines in 1993 at the start of tourism (this included Tuai Rumah Sonuk and

There is a range of other estimates that have been made over time about *bilik*-family earnings from tourism. For example, in relation to Stamang, AOS estimated that average yearly *bilik*-family earnings from tourism (not including income from handicrafts), was $211 MYR. This figure was based on payments made to the longhouse by AOS for tourism-related services in the period 1992-1996 and was supplied by AOS to the Sarawak State Government as part of a request for government funding to assist residents with buying the wooden materials needed to rebuild the longhouse in a 'traditional' style (see Appendix H).

Kadir Din's 1995 research on Skrang River tourist longhouses provides comparable statistics. He found that 83.4% of *bilik*-family members involved with tourism in Skrang River longhouses earned less than $50 MYR per month from tourism, while a further 14.6% earned between $50 and $100 MYR (Kadir Din 1995:28-29). This amount relates to individuals rather than *bilik*-families, which suggests that each *bilik*-family would have a slightly higher annual income if more than one member was earning from tourism. However, as Kadir Din points out, the system of rotating work through *bilik*-families means that work, such as dancing for tourists, which earns $8 MYR per performance, may only be rostered to a *bilik*-family between one and three times a month. Thus, earnings are likely to be as low as $8 to $24 MYR per month per *bilik*-family (Kadir Din 1995:27). Even if twice the amount of work was rostered through a particular *bilik*-family and $50 MYR per month was the average earning from tourism, this would mean that on a yearly basis the amount earned from tourism by each *bilik*-family would still be quite low, around $600 MYR.

A recent paper by Sanggin, Noweg, Abdullah and Mersat (2000) provides additional material on income from tourism in longhouse communities in the Ulu Ai, Engkari and Skrang River systems.[82] The paper includes analysis of the revenue-raising activities discussed in this chapter (and many of its observations mirror those contained in this thesis), although it does not discuss earnings from tourism on a *bilik*-family level,

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Pengulu Rentap) were better positioned to maintain and increase their wealth during the period that the longhouse remained involved with tourism.

[82] Also included in the study by Sanggin et al were the longhouse communities involved with tourism in Mulu National Park. As my research did not include fieldwork in Mulu, discussion of material included in the paper on that area is excluded.

focussing instead on river systems. The principal data produced from the authors' 'microeconomic' research are provided in a table detailing 'average annual net social benefits from tourism' (on a per-river basis) and providing amounts in Malaysian ringgit for identified categories. The data provided on the Ulu Ai, Engkari and Skrang River systems are reproduced in Table 2 below.

Activity	Benefit-Cost in Malaysian Ringgit $ MYR		
	Ulu Ai River	Engkari River	Skrang River
Transportation	46,073.75	26,020	1,790
Accommodation	-1,700	5,940	12,000
Entertainment (paid)	7,265	7,916	6,6006
Entertainment (not paid)	-4,275	0	0
Guiding	3,937.5	1,362.5	1,275
Helpers	3,550	450	-475
Employment (monthly wages)*	12,000	0	0
Other services**	7,918.75	4,520	760
Sale of handicrafts	33,500	10,300	13,650
Sale of food and beverages***	5,675	1,970	1,250
Head tax	16,800	14,000	10,600
Chief Tax	5,500	5,550	2,400
Donations and gifts	2,750	2,150	1,600
Education fund	2,000	0	0
Area Total	**$140,995**	**$80,178.5**	**$50,856**

Table 2: Per Annum 'Net Social Benefits' Of Tourism To Longhouse Communities On Ulu Ai, Skrang and Engkari River Systems (Adapted From Sanggin et al 2000).

* Includes part-time work with the Sarawak National Parks office. **Includes payments for cooking fuel, boat fuel, and staged offerings. *** Includes sale of rice wine, local fish, rice and other locally produced foodstuffs.

The paper provides little detailed analysis of the figures provided in the table. The discussion focuses on generalised observations about the longhouse tour industry without analysis of the 'microeconomic' aspects of longhouse tourism that the authors stated was their aim. However, it is noted that the larger figure for the Ulu Ai River system reflects the fact that at the time of the study the longhouses on that river system were the most popular in Sarawak. In particular, Nanga Sumpa longhouse is situated on the Ulu Ai River and, although I was not permitted to visit Nanga Sumpa by the company running tours there, it was widely-known as one of the most successful tourist longhouses in Sarawak at that time (in terms of tourist numbers and frequency of tours). Nanga Sumpa, therefore, probably accounts for much of the higher earnings recorded for the Ulu Ai River. Analysing the total 'net benefit' for each river system is difficult, as the authors have not published information on the number of longhouses surveyed. Nevertheless, from my own research I am aware that at least two longhouses on the

Engkari River and three longhouses on the Skrang were involved with tourism in 1998, the year the authors carried out their survey.[83] As my research was not as detailed with regard to longhouses on the Ulu Ai River, I will comment only on the total net benefit calculated for the Skrang and Engkari Rivers.

If the yearly 'net benefit from tourism' amount is divided by the number of longhouses involved with tourism on each river the total annual benefit per longhouse on the Engkari rivers comes to $40,089.25 MYR and on the Skrang River $16,952 MYR. If the amount paid to the community fund in head tax and *Tuai Rumah* fees is removed from each of these amounts the figure left over available for distribution amongst *bilik*-families comes to $30,314.25 MYR a year per longhouse on the Engkari River, and $12,618.67 MYR a year per longhouse on the Skrang River. If each sum is divided by 30, which is a conservative estimate of the average number of *bilik*-families in tourist longhouses on the two rivers, on the Engkari River each *bilik*-family would have received a net annual benefit from tourism of $1,010.47 MYR and on the Skrang River $420.62 MYR.

Unfortunately, the information provided in the paper does not allow for a more precise calculation. However, a strength of the paper is that the estimate for 'net benefit' from tourism includes a calculation in cash amounts of the benefit or loss generated by all the activities required of a longhouse involved with tourism, while the research for this thesis provides only cash flow to the longhouse communities and cash-in-hand income for *bilik*-families. On the other hand, there is a noticeable discrepancy between Sanggin et al's calculation of the net annual benefit resulting from the sale of handicrafts, which they show as significant cash amounts on each river (see Table 3) and my observation that the sale of handicrafts was a marginal cash earning activity.[84] Nevertheless, some of the conclusions that are made in Sanggin et al's research reflect my own observations and are pivotal to understanding the economics of longhouse tourism. For example:

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[83] I should emphasise that my estimate here is a conservative one, based on information gathered in 1996 and 2000. For example, Kadir Din notes in his *Report of Study on Impact of Tourism on the Local Population* that there were five longhouses on the Skrang River heavily involved with tourism in 1994-1995, with 1047 households and a population of 5641 people between them (Kadir Din 1995:6). If that figure is applied to the calculations that follow on earnings from tourism on a per-*bilik*-family basis, the estimated figures would be significantly reduced.

> It is normal practice among longhouse people to rotate among the families in participating in most tourist activities. Every family in the longhouse is encouraged to participate when and where possible. Nevertheless, tourism activity is still a part-time job for all respondents (Sanggin et al 2000:428).

The authors reach this conclusion even though their work demonstrates significant benefits flowing to longhouse communities from tourism. The principal explanation provided is that tourism work is distributed among all *bilik*-families in the longhouse. This accords with my conclusion and I suggest that it is supported by the fact that residents in all tourist longhouses continue to farm rice as a staple food crop as well as maintain cash crops such as pepper. Furthermore, in my experience, tourist longhouse residents described themselves primarily as farmers, regardless of their involvement in the tourism business. As Kadir Din notes in his 1995 study of Skrang River longhouse tourism, 96% of the residents of longhouses involved in tourism stated their main occupation as 'farmer' (Kadir Din 1995:17). Similarly, Kedit's 1975 research identifies the main occupation of 81.8% of Skrang River tourist longhouse residents as hill rice and cash crop farmers, while a further 13.6% farmed only hill rice with no cash crop (Kedit 1980:33, table 9).[85] Indeed, a common Iban phrase I heard when residents discussed business matters relating to tourism was 'we [longhouse residents] are farmers, we don't know business' '*Kami kerja tanah ajar, enda nemu bisnis*'. This is especially interesting given how adeptly the Iban have dealt with the business arrangements of tourism.

Importantly, both the estimate provided to me by Stamang residents of $200 to $500 MYR for yearly *bilik*-family earnings from tourism, and the higher estimate of $1,010.47 and $600 MYR per year I calculate from Sanggin et al's and Kadir Din's research, fall far short of the income needed to support a *bilik*-family for a year, if they are not supplementing their living by farming rice, growing vegetables and eating jungle produce. Furthermore, even if a massive increase in tourism occurred, or both calculations were tripled to rectify a serious underestimate, yearly *bilik*-family earnings from tourism would still fall far short of a self-sustaining wage. The National

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[84] Berma (2000), writing on commercial handicraft production in non-tourist Iban longhouses in the Kapit region of Sarawak, provides an interesting comparison here. Berma notes that income from handicrafts is 'unreliable due to stiff competition, low demand, and price instability' and is not reflective of the labour involved (Berma 2000:281).

Department of Statistics, Malaysia, suggests that a household earning below $429 MYR per month define a family as in poverty (Wee 1995:104-106[86]). By comparison, based on discussions I had with them about their wages, tour guides working in the longhouse tour industry earn between about $800 and $1000 MYR per month.

Another useful comparison is the income that *bilik*-families receive from cash cropping. According to Kadir Din's 1995 research in Skrang River tourist longhouse communities, 50.8% of *bilik*-families stated that they earned between $100 and $200 MYR per month from cash cropping, 44.4% stated that they earned between $201 and $300 MYR and a further 4.8% stated that they earned between $300 and $500 MYR per month (Kadir Din 1995:17-18). Although Kadir Din does not specify, one can assume that these figures include the sale of pepper, rubber, occasional sales of jungle produce at local markets and, possibly, surplus rice.[87]

Berma's (2000) and Oshima's (2000) research provide two further comparative examples of *bilik*-family earnings. Berma's research was conducted in several longhouses in the Kapit region of Sarawak in 1992 and her focus was the additional income generated from the sale of handicrafts produced by longhouse residents.[88] Her estimate of monthly *bilik*-family earnings from 'multiple economic activities' (including cash cropping and handicrafts) is $9,985.00 MYR a year or $831.79 MYR a month (Berma 2000:299).[89] Oshima, who researched Iban longhouse involvement in the logging industry in the Kapit region in 1994, estimates a monthly income from cash cropping of $192 MYR for a *bilik*-family. This excludes supplementary forms of income such as handicraft sales and wages from casual employment (often remitted home by men on *bejalai*) (Oshima 2000:308). However, Oshima also notes that the

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[85] Kedit does not identify the occupation of longhouse residents in his later research on Skrang River longhouse tourism published in 1994.

[86] As mentioned in Chapter One, Wee describes the measure used by the Department as 'somewhat arbitrary'. However, it provides a useful point of comparison here. The measure is based on an average Sarawak household of 5.24 persons.

[87] Kedit (1980a) notes that in 1971 the Iban of the Engkari River had a 'ritual prohibition' against growing pepper, possibly due to the steep nature of the terrain (Kedit 1980a:85). However, *adat* on the growing of pepper on the Engkari River has changed over time, as pepper crops are a key source of income for Engkari River Iban today.

[88] The handicrafts are produced for sale to merchants who on-sell them to retailers (rather than directly to tourists).

[89] Berma does not define whether 'multiple economic activities' includes monies remitted home by *bilik*-family members on *bejalai*. However, I assume that it does because she refers to logging camp work. Such work is seasonal and is the sort of work that men go on *bejalai* to seek.

average monthly salary for individual longhouse residents working in timber camps was the considerable sum of $1,944 MYR per month (Oshima 2000:308).

It can be assumed that the economics of farming in longhouse communities on the Skrang River and in the Kapit region is comparable to that on the Engkari River and at Stamang. Therefore, using Kadir Din, Berma and Oshima's estimates, if $100 MYR in monthly earnings from farming per *bilik*-family is taken as a minimum estimate and $831 MYR is taken as the maximum and applied to Stamang, this suggests that *bilik*-family earnings from tourism *per annum* are just above those earned from farming *per month*. This excludes the intermittent sale of handcrafts, which has the potential for significant earnings but may result in no income. Furthermore, if consideration is given to the fact that an individual longhouse resident can earn almost $2,000 MYR a month working in a logging camp, monthly *bilik*-family earnings from tourism are, comparatively, very low. However, logging camp work is seasonal and during the height of the wet season work is scarce. Ironically, this corresponds with the tourist low season and reduced earnings from tourism.

In conclusion, in relation to the economic aspects of longhouse tourism, the evidence suggests that longhouse tourism provides residents with income and other benefits that are an incentive for them to become involved with tourism as a business delivering income, but that wages from tourism are comparatively low and can be seen as supplementary income. Nevertheless, longhouse communities involved with tourism have greater access to cash resources and, in the case of earnings directed to the community fund, a definite collective benefit for the community is gained. Significantly, because of the current mode of operation of the industry, longhouse communities receive income from tourism only if certain terms set by longhouse tour operators are followed. This significantly complicates gauging the combined economic and social benefits of longhouse tourism.

In addition, this chapter has shown that longhouse communities involved with commercial tourism are keen participants in the business and skilfully manage the tours to generate income. Within the longhouse community, this requires agreement among *bilik*-families enabling the longhouse community to act as a corporate whole when

dealing commercially with longhouse tour companies and conducting the tours. This arrangement is not without tension because the traditional economic (and social) independence of the *bilik*-family is challenged by a business that values the economic potential of the longhouse as a single unit.

Finally, the account of the standard tour program and the special events programs has demonstrated that longhouse residents are willing and eager participants in the tours conducted at longhouses, including the staged performance of traditional culture and the use of wild Borneo themes. However, this does not mean that there is not a range of paradoxical, ambiguous and overlapping interpretations of Iban culture displayed during the tours that include it being described variously as 'real', 'living', 'authentic', 'contemporary', 'past', 'traditional', 'staged', and 'commercial'. Such ambiguity is central to the current longhouse tour product. Furthermore, because the longhouse tour product involves residents providing hospitality to tourists in an environment where the operative business relationship is between the residents and the tour operators, a myriad of sometimes competing and sometimes complementary relationships exist between the three groups. For residents this involves complications about traditions of hospitality in a modern, commercial setting, including expectations of appropriate behaviour, enjoying the company of tourists and a desire to genuinely please guests.

Chapter 7: Commercial Perspectives: Tourism Operators, Iban and the Longhouse Product

> The more pertinent question regarding tourism and culture, is who decides on how "culture" could be used in tourism. Tourism brokers, that is, travel agencies and tour operators, appropriate local culture into tourism packages to meet tourists' demands. When the host "culture" becomes a unit of market consumption by others who pay but do not know and share its meanings, these meanings inadvertently become modified or altered to suit the market needs (Ong 2000:452).

> The current situation appears to be one of surplus physical capacity at longhouses. While some heavily visited longhouses indicate signs of "visitor fatigue" there is ongoing desire by longhouse communities to accommodate more tourists...The overriding trend is a constant push 'up-river' to more remote longhouses. Tensions in the market, however, suggest that these growth figures may be difficult to sustain. First, there is evidence that operators are already shifting to more remote locations as downstream longhouses become more crowded and modernised...Over time, pioneer operations may not only shift to more remote locations, they may well shift to other destinations outside Sarawak that better suit their expectations (Clark et al 1993:232).

This chapter has two primary purposes. The first is to report and examine the voices of tour operators and longhouse residents about certain aspects of the longhouse tour industry. The second purpose is to provide further evidence that the tour product as it is currently configured is a formulaic stage-play of Iban tradition and material culture, focussed predominantly on the longhouse and its surrounds and that there is no place in the industry for longhouse communities who attempt to move outside that paradigm, especially as longhouse residents have little control over the organisational structure of the industry.

To achieve the above two purposes the chapter is divided into three major, related sections. The first section presents the majority view of longhouse residents that they are enthusiastic about participating in the longhouse tourism industry, primarily for profit. The evidence here further illustrates the mismatch between the tour industry version of Iban culture and the reality of contemporary longhouse life.

The second section presents the views of three longhouse tour operators towards aspects of the longhouse tour industry, including the nature of the product and the role of the Iban, and intersperses those views with three 'case study' historical sketches of tourist longhouse communities, each of which were faced with rejection by the tour industry at

the point at which they decided to build a new, modern longhouse.[1] In contrast to the frankness of the Iban about the economic motivations that lie behind their involvement in tourism, the tour operators are evasive and contradictory, seemingly unable to clearly describe the tour product, and uncomfortable with or unwilling to publicly recognise the role of the Iban as business people within the industry. Furthermore, they are concerned to control Iban/host interaction to avoid Iban behaving, or appearing to behave, in a 'commercial' fashion, which they perceive as undermining the longhouse as a commodity involving Iban 'traditional' hospitality.

The perspectives of the tour operators, coupled with the longhouse tourism histories, highlights the fact that tour operators and tourist longhouse communities face a contradiction about the future of the industry. Tourist longhouse communities must ensure that their longhouses conform to a particular 'traditional' architectural style if they wish tour operators to run, or continue running, tours to their communities. Without old-fashioned longhouses the industry is threatened with closure unless a new tour product is developed, or (as has happened in some cases) residents agree to live in a built-for-tourism longhouse. The material in this chapter also highlights the potential for tension between the choices and opinions of individual *bilik*-families and the longhouse community as a modern business provider.

The views and opinions of the tour operators reveal that, while they have some knowledge of Iban culture in the context of its potential for commercial reward, their interest in and understanding of the complexity of contemporary Iban identity is limited. This underlines the paradox that longhouse tours focus on the idea of visiting a 'traditional' longhouse in a jungle setting and providing limited, stereotyped images of the Iban and their past social and material culture, while (as Chapter Six has demonstrated) the product includes tourist/Iban interaction in a way that expresses contemporary lived realities, including the business-oriented nature of the tour product. This is complicated by the fact longhouse residents enjoy hosting tourists, making the

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[1] The longhouse tourism histories discussed in this chapter are assembled from multiple sources including, conversations with the residents, tour operators, tour guides and from discussions with various people working in the longhouse tour industry and other and peripheral industries.

tourist/Iban encounter at once highly stylised and planned as well as spontaneous, mutually satisfying and within the parameters of traditional codes of hospitality.

The final section of the chapter provides a detailed account of the tourism history of the Stamang longhouse community, which further illustrates the primary tenets of the longhouse tour industry for longhouse communities. Stamang's tourism history shares many similarities with those described in the second section. However, at Stamang, the tour company AOS 'adopted' the community for its longhouse tours. As will be seen, the adoption, marketed as an exercise in corporate philanthropy and responsible cultural tourism, merely obscured the company's commercial motivations, and the story of the community's rejection by the company at the point at which a new longhouse was required provides a potent case study example of this corporate reality. It also further highlights the inability of the longhouse tour industry to reconcile conflicting and ambiguous views of 'traditional' and 'modern' longhouse life, including Iban willingness to engage in tourism business and transform their longhouses into tourist commodities as well as their desire for modernisation and development.

Iban views of tourism and tourists

Frequently while I was at Stamang I asked residents why they had decided to become involved with commercial longhouse tourism.[2] The overwhelming response was that the community liked receiving tourists, and the statement 'we truly like to receive tourists' (*kami rindu amat nerima penatai temuai*) was repeated to me several times. Positive statements like this were often accompanied by requests that I 'bring more tourists'. Other more emphatic examples included:

> We are glad when the tourists arrive here. We Iban truly like to see tourists arrive, we have never at any time not liked them *Nyadi ba pengerindu maia temuai datai ditu. Kami Iban sigi rindu amai medai tourist datai, enda kala kami enda rindu.*
>
> We really honestly like to see tourists arrive at our longhouse, like at Stamang now. For example, for us at Stamang we all like to welcome tourists every day. We welcome all tourists to the longhouse, we don't choose white people (Europeans), all are allowed to come *Kami sigi rindu amai meda penatai temuai ngagai rumah kami ba Nanga Stamang diatu. Baka Kami ba*

[2] AOS's offer to the community to become involved with tourism is discussed in the last section of the chapter.

Rumah Stamang semoa rindu meda penatai temuai tiap ari. Semoa temuai kami serumah sigi nerima penatai sida, sigi nadai di pilih bangsa orang putih, semoa asoh datai.

The work of Kedit (1980b, 1993); Caslake (1993); Zeppel (1994) and Eide (1998) records similarly positive attitudes to tourism on the part of residents. Caslake noted specifically of the residents of Stamang that they 'were genuine in their positive feelings towards both tourism and tourists' (1993:88). It would appear (at least in their responses to questioning by researchers) that the residents of Stamang were consistent in the view that they liked tourists and tourism.

In my experience, longhouse residents generally linked positive sentiments about receiving tourists with the observation that tourists were a source of 'income' or 'profit'. For example, in an interview I conducted with Pengulu Rentap from Stamang to discuss the longhouse's involvement with tourism he provided the following explanation about why he 'liked' tourists visiting Stamang:

> We like to receive tourists as they give us additional income because they pay to come and we charge for the boat trip and also a head tax. *Kami rindu nerima penatai temuai laban temuai tu tau meri penguntong ka kami laban sida iya bisi baya, baka 'trip' perau tau ka cukai pala.*
>
> We like to receive tourists because the more tourists the more profit from working by taking them up and down the river and jungle trekking. *Rindu penatai temuai, laban maioh penguntong ia, kami bisi kerja, bisi gagai ngambi temuai enggau nganjong mai sida bejalai nya nambah menoa kami ditu.*

Other longhouse residents at Stamang were similarly frank:

> We like tourists because there is much profit, we have work picking them up and down (the river), the more we receive the more we gain *Kami rindu temuai laban mayioh penguntong, kami bisi kerja, bisi gagi ngambi enggau nganjong mai sida bejalai nya nambah ka penatai pemisi kami.*
>
> We accept tourists as they bring income and we benefit from their visit and we love their arrival.
>
> My opinion is that it's a good thing that tourists come to our longhouse because it brings income and improves our life. *Runding aku ba penatai temuai ngagai rumah kamis iya nya manah laban bisi meri penguntong ngangai Rumah panjai mai penyenyang.*
>
> We like tourists to come here – we have money. *Kami rindu turis datai – kami duit.*

Notably, in almost every interview and survey form that was completed by residents, 'receiving profit' (*bisi untong*) or 'because of business' (*laban bisnis*) was declared as a reason why entertaining tourists was considered 'good' for the longhouse and a reason why tourists were 'liked'. As one might expect, there were also negative remarks made about tourism-related issues, such as the low pay and the sometimes strange or poor

behaviour of tourists.[3] However, on the whole, residents were extremely positive about tourism and expressed a desire for it to continue and to intensify, which was also a desire for tourism business to grow and for profits to increase.

In addition to profit, residents often remarked that they enjoyed hosting tourists because their presence made longhouse life more interesting. This was the case at Stamang particularly (where I suspect that the level of enthusiasm and interest in tourists that residents displayed was heightened by the relative short time the community had been involved with tourism).[4] For example, Stamang residents commented:

> We like to receive tourists as it adds more fun and we also benefit a little from tourism.

> I'm really happy with them coming and some kind hearted tourists they sometimes give things to the longhouse. Another reason is because they increase our income. Another reason is because they are entertaining when they do Iban dance and other things. *Ba aku siko endang amat rindu. Pia laban maioh temuai sekeda manah ati lalu bisi meri kitai barang. Lalu bebukai laban temuai to orang ti bisi nambah ka penatai pemisi. Tambah pia temuai tu selalu mai pengrami lebih baka ajat Iban enggau utai bukai.*

> It's good when tourists come to the longhouse to observe our traditional lifestyle. Also, because it livens up the longhouse with lots of activities. *Leboh maia temuai datai ngagai Rumah aku bisi insor meda gaya asal pengawa kitai Iban. Laban bisi mai pengerami serta maioh macham main.*

In addition, some residents commented that they enjoyed hosting and meeting tourists because it was an opportunity to exchange ideas, including learning some English:

> We like to host tourists because we like to associate with them and also to exchange ideas. *Rindu penatati temuai laban kita ulih begulai engau temuai lalu deka nemu mega pasal mensa sida din sereta berkutar penemu dalam semua hal.*

> The tourists can teach us one or two words of English. Also they can give us new ideas and positive lifestyle – positive cultural exchange.

> In my opinion, the arrival of tourism to the longhouse is very positive, in terms of additional income and also because it exposes us to new ideas and knowledge when we talk with tourists. That's why tourism business is verygood.

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[3] A common comment was that Iban were not paid enough (*kami enda bayar tentu cukup*). A common complaint about the behaviour of tourists was that they could be arrogant (*sumbong*).

[4] Regular tours to Stamang started in 1993. In my observation the longer a longhouse community had been involved with tourism the less enthusiasm residents displayed towards tourists and tourism work. Tour guides and longhouse tour operators made similar observations to me several times and, while recognising the very general nature of such observations, the point is worth considering in relation to whether 'visitor fatigue' affected tourist longhouse communities over time.

Stamang residents frequently used the phrase 'we like mixing with tourists' (*rindu begulai enggau temuai*) when I asked them whether they enjoyed entertaining tourists in the longhouse. Many residents referred to the night entertainment program for tourists (see Chapter Six) as enjoyable because it made the longhouse more festive and crowded (*rami*).

Another reason given by Stamang residents about why they liked longhouse tourism was because they enjoyed showing tourists Iban 'traditional' culture and 'the Iban way of life' (*pendiau Iban, pengidup Iban, gaya Iban*):[5]

> In my opinion the tourists want to come to our longhouse because they want to see our lifestyle, our way of life. *Runding aku penatai temuai ngagai rumah kami laban temuai deka meda gaya idup pendiau Iban.*[6]
>
> They (tourists) want to see traditional costumes, the loincloth, swords, blowpipes, war jackets, use masks and so on. *Sida deka meda ngena sirat bengepan nunda adat lama, ngena duku ilang, sumpit, gagong, tau tuping enngau utai bukai.*
>
> In the past the Iban were well known for their bravery in protecting their territory from enemies. Tourists want to see our traditional clothing, which is more attractive than other races. *Dulu suda bansa Iban ending udah tebilang berani lebuh ngetan ke menoa ari serang munsoh. Temuai ka meda pakaian asal bansa Iban ti nyelai ari bansa bukai.*

As the above comments indicates some residents saw longhouse tourism as an opportunity to proudly display their history and they were aware that tourists wanted to see certain well-known markers of 'traditional' Iban culture, including the longhouse lifestyle or way of life. This highlights the issue that for longhouse residents their relationship with tourists was more complex than merely delivering the necessary program of activities and entertainment required by the tour itinerary and that tourists were considered as more than merely vehicles for profit. The behaviour and opinion of tourists during staged moments such as the gift-giving ceremony, mattered to longhouse residents. However, income remained the primary reason why tourists were entertained by longhouse residents and the basis for the community's relationship with the tour company.

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[5] Of interest here is that Kedit's report on Skrang River tourism in 1975 reveals that 74% of the Iban he interviewed thought that tourists wanted to visit them 'in order to observe the Iban way of life' (Kedit 1980:11). Unfortunately, Kedit's report does not include any of the original Iban-language responses to his questionnaire. Instead all the material is presented in English with percentages indicating the strength or weakness of responses to particular questions.

[6] In Iban *pendiau* can mean both 'way of life' and 'place where one lives'.

Some tourist longhouse residents (including from Stamang) referred to 'traditional hospitality' (*adat jamu*) as a reason why they welcomed tourists. This reason was not given often and it was not necessarily proposed as an alternative to the acknowledged economic motive for hosting tourists, or the relationship between the community and tour operator.

Traditional hospitality features prominently in the promotional material for longhouse tours and is frequently mentioned in passing in travel writing and academic literature on the Iban (for examples, see Gomes 1911:67; Jilan 1993:12; Rowthorn et al 1999:398-399). Pringle (1970) notes in the introductory chapter of his well-known work:

> Inside [the longhouse], a warm welcome invariably awaits the guest, regardless of how relatively wealthy or poor the community may be. A vigorous tradition of hospitality has come to be a hallmark of longhouse life...Longhouse-dwellers are typically open and gregarious with foreigners, eager for news of the outside world, and extremely fond of entertaining...The longhouse hospitality syndrome is not a means of indicating deference; it is designed to produce mutual benefits, with at least as much satisfaction and enlightenment accruing to the host community as to the often red-eyed and exhausted guests (Pringle 1970:6).

However, while Pringle and others have attributed the Iban with a generous and 'warm' tradition of hospitality, there is a general absence of detailed discussion on the custom in the literature (although Pringle's comment about 'mutual benefits' goes some way to defining the essence of the tradition and contributes to an understanding of tourist/Iban interaction in the context of commercial longhouse tours). Gaining a sense of what 'traditional hospitality' might mean is difficult because the term is used varyingly amongst longhouse residents, tourists, travel industry personnel and in contemporary and historical accounts of the Iban (and other Bornean longhouse dwellers). For example, in Kedit's 1980 work (referring to his earlier research) he makes several observations suggesting that longhouse residents participated in tourism, and 'liked' tourists both because of their commercial interest in tourism and their 'traditional' belief in hospitality. However, Kedit's statements are not entirely consistent or clear on this issue:

> These two groups of responses [referring to separate survey questions] indicated quite clearly that in keeping with their traditional custom, Iban loved to have visitors to their longhouses, regardless of whether they were tourists or otherwise, or whether the Iban could gain in some

> materialistic way or not...95% of them [Iban] said that hospitality to visitors of the Iban still prevail [sic]. An insignificant number (2%) said that it did not. This small negative response might probably be due to the fact that the Iban were getting more and more 'business-minded', and to entertain visitors free of charge would be too taxing for their tight economic situation (Kedit 1980:9).
>
> Asked whether they were keen to entertain tourists: 85% replied yes and an insignificant number said they were not keen. The reason why the majority said 'yes' might be due to traditionalistic ideas, besides it could be also due to commercial interest (Kedit 1980:10).

One focus of Kedit's research was to examine whether tour operators were exploiting the 'traditional hospitality' of Skrang River Iban in a way that allowed them to lower the cost of their tours and increase their profit.[7] In this way, the report reflects an anthropological paradigm of the period that the culture of non-industrialised or 'tribal' people was somehow 'threatened' or in danger of exploitation because of tourism.[8] Unfortunately Kedit's report does not identify the customs or 'traditionalistic ideas' that he was concerned might be being exploited, nor does he elaborate on the concept of Iban 'commercialism'. Nevertheless, what is implicit throughout the report is that Kedit views receiving tourists in a 'materialistic way' as being in opposition to traditional hospitality. To some extent this has been reflected in other recent studies of longhouse tourism (see Chapter Three), all of which refer in some way to 'Iban hospitality' or, conversely 'Iban commercialism', but do not take issue with what either concept means, leaving the reader with little understanding of the terms other than that the writer views them as contradictory concepts.

In Kedit's 1980 report he notes that in 1975 some Skrang River longhouse residents were becoming more 'business-minded' (Kedit 1980:9). He observes that a significant percentage of residents saw 'commercial benefit' as the most significant benefit from tourism:

> From the respondents' point of view there were two main benefits from tourism. First, was the commercial benefit, which 42% of them pointed out. And the others (4%) [sic] thought the tourists brought them good luck; while the rest mentioned some negligible benefits from tourism'(Kedit 1980:26).[9]

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[7] Pers.comm.Peter Kedit. The report does not answer this question in any detail. Instead, it observes that longhouse residents were 'naïve with regard to the business enterprise of tourism' and 'open to all sorts of exploitation by tour operators' (Kedit 1980:25).

[8] Crick has stated in relation to material produced at that time, 'There was frequently so much bias evident in the social science literature on tourism that it was sometimes difficult to tell whether an author was engaging in serious analysis or merely indulging in outbursts of emotional hostility' (Crick 1994:17).

[9] Examination of the tables contained in the report shows that 50% of those interviewed did not answer the question. Kedit does not provide any explanation as to why this was the case.

The distinction Kedit draws between traditional hospitality, on the one hand, and commercial interest, on the other hand, is not explained by the survey results he presents. The responses of longhouse residents to Kedit's survey could be interpreted to suggest that residents saw themselves as hosting tourists in a customary fashion and that deriving commercial benefit from being a host was part of that custom. At Stamang although 'profit' was expressed as a primary reason why residents liked to receive tourists, 'traditional hospitality' was not spoken of as an incompatible concept. This is not to say that Iban codes of hospitality about hosting foreigners are inextricably linked to profit seeking. Rather, I suggest that residents were flexible in the way they viewed domestic longhouse life, custom, tradition, business and income from tourism.

One example of this occurred when a resident of Stamang died only hours before a tour group was to arrive at the longhouse and in circumstances where the community was unable to contact the tour company and cancel the tour. After much discussion (and not without some lingering tension) residents agreed to entertain the tourists in the normal way, even though, ordinarily, *adat* relating to mourning periods would require a sombre atmosphere in the longhouse for a significant period of time (Appendix I provides a detailed summary of these events). Kedit identified a similar change to *adat* in both his 1980 and 1993 reports on Skrang River longhouse tours, noting that the residents of Mejong longhouse changed their *adat* because tourism was 'prospering' and they wanted to be able to continue to entertain tourists during mourning periods (Kedit 1980b:11; 1993:54).[10]

Another notable incident at Stamang occurred when two backpacker-type tourists arrived unexpectedly on the eve of *gawai dayak*, the public holiday to celebrate the culture of Sarawak's non-Muslim indigenous people (including the Iban and other groups[11]), which coincides with the end of the rice harvest. The tourists explained to me

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[10] In his 1980 report Kedit notes that at Murat longhouse the company paid a fine of $5 MYR, one knife and one cock if a tour group arrived during a mourning period, and that upon payment merry-making and the tour program continued as usual (Kedit 1980b:11). In 1993 Kedit reports that at Mejong the company paid a $50 MYR fine if the deceased was still in the longhouse, $30 MYR if the deceased had only recently been buried and $20 MYR if the burial had occurred in the previous three days. After 14 days the fine was waived. Kedit states that the fine was meant to 'block/cover the eyes and ears of departed spirits' so that they would not harm those present in the longhouse (Kedit 1993:54). Details of the fines that were in place at Stamang are provided in Appendix I.

[11] Refer to Chapter One for a breakdown of the groups commonly known as Dayaks.

that they had not wanted to take a commercial longhouse tour and assumed they could negotiate to stay at Stamang without the usual charge associated with such tours because of the well-known tradition of longhouse hospitality and the custom of hosting visitors during *gawai dayak*.[12] During *gawai dayak* longhouse communities generally host 'open house' celebrations and visitors, whether Iban or otherwise, are welcome to stay and participate in the celebrations, although an invitation is usually preferred. Typically, visitors bring food and alcohol and either stay in a friend's *bilik*, with the *Tuai Rumah*, or sleep in the *ruai*.

As it turned out, the backpackers were charged for their stay and, because they did not have a guide and had to negotiate the payment for their stay and services (such as food and cooking) without assistance, they paid slightly more than if they had booked a regular tour through the tour company. When I discussed with residents (including Tuai Rumah Sonuk) why they did not follow established custom and host the travellers like any other guest during *gawai dayak* I was told it was because the travellers were 'tourists' (*turis*) and that the longhouse was a 'tourism business' (*rumah kami bisnis turis*). A similar attitude was evident in other tourist longhouses that I visited, especially those that had been involved with tourism for many years. Some residents commented to me that *adat* Iban was not being followed because tourists were not made to feel welcome in the longhouse and that tourists were ignored except for the organised activities and performances. Other residents felt that *adat* Iban did not apply because the longhouse was involved in tourism business and the tourists were paying customers.

Conversely, at non-tourist longhouses I visited near the town of Song many residents were surprised that visitors to tourist longhouses paid for their meals on an itemised basis and remarked that their *adat* was clearly different to that of the tourist longhouses

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[12] *Gawai Dayak* was proclaimed on 25 September 1964 as a public holiday in place of Sarawak Day (e-borneo.com). The public holiday falls on 1 June every year, although festivities in many longhouse communities may stretch over a week. On 31 May/1 June most Iban longhouse communities declare open house and host visitors from across Sarawak. In the days just prior to *gawai dayak*, there is a mass exodus of Iban from major towns to upriver longhouse communities to celebrate the festival (usually accompanied by non-Iban friends whom they have invited to celebrate with them). Because *gawai dayak* is held at the end of the rice cycle it is sometimes referred to as the rice harvest festival. Strictly speaking this is incorrect as there are a number of specific rights and festivals associated with the rice cycle. Most Iban see *gawai dayak* as the main secular celebration of Iban culture as well as associating it with end of the rice harvest. One longhouse resident explained *gawai dayak* to me as 'Iban Christmas', an analogy that underscored its premier status on the calendar of Iban festivities. It should be noted that *gawai dayak* is only one

I had frequented,[13] (although residents still expected that I would remunerate them in some way for hosting me).[14]

One reason why the backpackers may have turned up at Stamang in the manner in which they did is that in the Sarawak travel industry, and more broadly amongst tourists who visit Sarawak, traditional hospitality is often spoken of as meaning that all travellers who wish to stay in an Iban longhouse will be provided with free food and board.[15] Heidi Munan, a local Iban studies scholar and journalist has commented:

> In recent decades longhouse hospitality had been abused by travellers who found this fee board and lodging almost too good to refuse, it was, as an elder from the Iban tribe concedes, innocent abuse in most cases 'we don't tell a fellow he's a nuisance, he should know that himself' (Munan 1992:27).

Munan is concerned that travellers (referring to tourists) have abused longhouse hospitality, which she describes as 'free board and lodging'. Although Munan is correct that the convention in many Iban longhouses is that visitors will be warmly received and given accommodation and meals, such hospitality does not mean that visitors should not contribute in some way to their stay. Longhouse residents explained to me that they expected all guests (including fee-paying tourists) to reciprocate longhouse hospitality by, at the very least, attempting to converse and tell stories in the *ruai* at night and, if possible, by providing some other form of entertainment, such as teaching a game, showing tricks or even offering to put on a dance show. This mirrors Pringle's suggestion that Iban hospitality is provided with a view to the mutual benefits that may flow from it. In the case of longhouse tours this may include entertainment,

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of many *gawai* festivals celebrated by the Iban, most of which are of a primarily religious nature (Jensen 1974:195-200, Sandin 1977:vii-xvi). For a general definition of *gawai* see the Glossary.

[13] Although *adat* varied between longhouses on the same river, when travelling in different Iban regions of Sarawak longhouse residents often spoke of *adat* more generally as it related to different river systems. For example, residents would compare *adat* from the Batang Ai River system with *adat* from the Rajang River.

[14] However, when I was travelling with Iban friends from Stamang and stayed a night in another nearby longhouse there was no expectation that I should pay, other than by contributing to the cost of meals.

[15] This assumption usually extends to all longhouse-dwelling people in Sarawak. For example, the Lonely Planet travel guide for Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei (1999) includes in its section 'Visiting a Longhouse' advice on 'longhouse hospitality'. The guide does not refer specifically to Iban codes of hospitality but instead speaks broadly of 'orang ulu' (see Chapter One) traditions of hospitality (Rothorn et al 1999:399). In addition, the guide includes the following advice, 'Some people have reported that some of the longhouse inhabitants between Kapit and Belaga are unfriendly towards to visitors. No doubt they are sick to death of strangers turning up out of the blue and expecting to be welcomed with open arms, fed and entertained...Don't let this put you off, as generally the Iban are very friendly people who welcome foreigners and are pleased to invite you into their homes' (Rothorn et al 1999:399). On the one hand, this dampens the view of an all-embracing longhouse hospitality, yet, on the other hand, seemingly encourages it.

conversation and broadening one's horizons, as well as an expectation of some form of reciprocity, in the from of purchasing a handicraft or giving an appropriate gift.

The misconception that longhouse residents provide free board and accommodation to all travellers without reciprocation derives in part from distortions of the tradition of wild Borneo and how Westerners imagine and relate their experiences with Bornean peoples. In this view longhouse people are portrayed as providing a kind of simple 'native' hospitality, while reference to them seeking recompense for their efforts is often excluded. This tradition also involves a suggestion that such 'primitive' people are honoured to have 'civilised' guests. The passage below, reporting a visit to an Iban longhouse from *A Lady's Journey Around The World* by Ida Pfeiffer (1855) is exemplary:

> ...not only did these dreaded savages do us no harm, but they behaved in the most friendly manner and invited me to pay them a visit. I accepted, in order to show that I trusted them, and set value on their invitation...They received me with the same marks of kindness as their husbands, and made me sit down with them. There were eatables spread out upon the ground, especially a number of little cakes of various yellows...The good folks would insist on feasting me with these dainties; and to please them I did manage to swallow some moutlfuls. (Pfeiffer 1855:101-102).

While Pfeiffer's account, like much travel writing on Borneo, portrays longhouse residents as simple generous 'savages', there are historical accounts that reveal longhouse residents engaging and working with foreign visitors in a business-like fashion. For example, in the following extract from *A Naturalist and Hunter at Large in the Jungle* (1885), William Hornaday recounts his experience negotiating a fee for a hunting assistant with Gumbong, a resident of the longhouse in which Hornaday was staying at the time:

> When we arrived here, Ah See assured me there was not a cent of money nor a measure of rice in the house. Since that, they have earned enough in various ways in my service to enable them to send off twice, to buy rice in the house; but now they are getting stomach proud, and are prepared to kill the goose that lay the golden eggs. For example the old man, Gumbong, who has hunted with me during the past weeks made up his mind last night that thirty cents per dayis not enough wages and therefore has stuck for fifty. Ah Kee lectured him roundly, and I told him to go to blazes; but he declared that he would not for less than fifty cents a day (Hornaday in King 1999: 241-242).

Furthermore, from the late nineteenth century onwards academic writing acknowledges Iban involvement in business dealings and commerce, including cash cropping and trading for cash (see Pringle 1970; Freeman 1992; Kedit 1993; Jawan 1994). Linklater

(1990) has also related his experience negotiating a fee for staying in a longhouse and for permission to observe the Iban hornbill festival (*gawai Kenyalang*):

> ...his [the Tuai Rumah] initial response to our request to stay for the festival was magnanimous. "You are welcome to stay,' he growled, 'but if you eat up all our rice, we'll boot you back down the Rejang."...With less than a week to go before the festival, he had still not been able to buy enough eggs, chickens and arak. Tactfully Michael suggested that we might be able to contribute to some of these items..."If you do that", he announced with dignity, "I shall treat you as members of my family" (Linklater 1990:77).

Linklater recounts another conversation with the *Tuai Rumah* of the longhouse in which he was staying:

> "I will never ask you for money", Jingga declared defiantly..."But you have lived with the Iban", he went on, "you know they are poor, and often need help – especially money, and because you are generous, you always give help – and money"..."You will give", he said hopelessly, "but I Jingga, shall never ask for it" (Linklater 1990: 167).

What is clear from the above discussion is that widely-known traditions of Iban hospitality include an expectation of reciprocity, which may be open to negotiation and include payment in kind or in cash. Furthermore, although longhouse tourism is clearly understood by longhouse residents as a business enterprise that can deliver them income, they do not necessarily see it as being at odds with traditions of longhouse hospitality, or as something that detracts from the enjoyment they derive from the company of tourists.

In considering longhouse traditions of hospitality some brief comment must be made on *bejalai* which, as outlined in Chapter One, is the Iban custom of travelling to seek paid work and adventure. *Bejalai* has parallels with tourism because it recognises the worthiness of travel as a means of broadening one's horizons, and the tradition of longhouse communities hosting travellers is linked to the fact the Iban men visit and stay at other longhouse communities while on *bejalai*.

At Stamang and in other tourist longhouses I heard some older longhouse residents refer to tourists as 'on *bejalai*'. This suggests that hospitality towards tourists was offered by some residents because they recognised tourist visits as a form of *bejalai*. On one occasion at Stamang when a male tourist was explaining the purpose of his journey a longhouse resident (who was assisting the tour guide with translating) told other residents seated around in the *ruai* that the tourist was on *bejalai*. On a similar occasion

a guide described a tourist as on *bejalai* to a group of residents sitting in the *ruai* and a conversation ensued amongst the residents about how the tourist was able to travel so far 'on *bejalai*'. One resident made the point, 'Iban are too poor to travel to tourist home countries (*menoa turis*) on *bejalai*'. Despite these examples, in my observation the perception that tourists were on *bejalai* was not common at Stamang or in other tourist longhouses and it was clear that, for most residents, tourist were seen as paying customers, a view that did not preclude residents from enjoying the company of tourists and treating them hospitably.

On the whole, longhouse residents viewed tourism positively and this was underscored most significantly by a recognition of the commercial opportunity and income that tourism brought to *bilik*-families and the community. However, residents also genuinely liked meeting tourists and the exposure to the wider world that it entailed. Iban codes of hospitality were also significant, although not to the extent that they undermined the view of longhouse as a tourism business and the requirement to charge for services. In addition, some longhouse residents were proud that the tours focussed on Iban 'traditional' culture and the longhouse. Whether residents were aware that the tours were marketed and designed to appeal to the conventions of wild Borneo, which define them as a remote unchanged indigenous 'attraction', is a question for further study. As the following discussion demonstrates, longhouse tour operators were certainly aware of this.

Tourism operators and tourism histories

The Borneo Sunshine perspective

As outlined in Chapter Five, in the early 1980s commercial longhouse tour operations expanded from the Skrang River to longhouses on the Lemanak River. The Borneo Sunshine Tour Company (BS) was the first to commence tours on the Lemanak River,

where it began operating tours to Demong longhouse in 1983[16] and continued to do so until 2000.

The following passage is taken from an interview I conducted in 1996 with Mr James Fong, BS's owner and manager. In the passage Mr Fong explains the longhouse tour product his company markets and his views on longhouse tourism:

> **Fong** For the longhouses we are mainly selling the culture. For the Ibans they have a very unique way of life, it's more of the community way of life, living in a big house where there are no conflicts. I think it is these kinds of things, the community way of life, the sharing and caring amongst the people in the longhouse.
>
> **Kruse** What do you think is important for the tourists to see when you are selling the longhouse tour? I mean, in terms of making tourists satisfied, do you think the tourists have to see certain things, like the longhouse has to be traditional, not concrete and they have to see blowpipes? What do you think tourists should see?
>
> **Fong** Of course, the longhouse, the structure, this kind of thing most of the tourists expect it to be quite primitive in the sense that all of the materials are local, from the forest, the local materials like palm leaf, all wooden, everything must be wooden. Some of them can be quite disappointed when they arrive here when they see that they have zinc [corrugated iron or tin roofing], concrete, glass window shutter and all this kind of thing. I think the main thing is to sell the beauty of the life of the people in the longhouse, their culture, their beliefs. All these kinds of things make it very exciting.
>
> **Kruse** I think that in a lot of the longhouses the tourists are still turning up with the wrong idea, they want to see a 'primitive' longhouse, no zinc roof, no television, no windows.
>
> **Fong** That is also, I mean a lot of these tourists need to be educated in that way because when they come in, and when they talk about Borneo, Borneo is something very mysterious, very wild and very backward. Before they come in they have this kind of impression, so when they arrive here, when they land at the airport and come into the city they have this five star hotel and these kinds of things. They are not coming for these kinds of things, they are coming because they heard Borneo has headhunters but these are the things that they read in the chapters of books that are twenty or thirty years old. Still when they come to see the longhouses and the Iban natural way of life and how they live in big families it can still be quite impressive for what they have expected. I think when we come in, when we sell the bnghouse, it's mainly on culture. So we explain to them the way of life and a lot of the tourists expect them to be dressed up still in loincloth and all this kind of thing. I think that a lot of the young people [referring to Iban] feel that when they come back from school, from work, when the parents have to dress up in loincloth to show the tattoos and do the dance, they feel insulted or whatever. But if they have an open mind this is more to show the traditional life of the Iban and that is what we are promoting. In a way they benefit a lot from tourism through this. They sell handicrafts and this is besides the agency giving money for all these services, the work force from the longhouses. I think it can be quite a handsome profit for the Dayaks.

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[16] Prior to beginning operations to Demong, Mr Fong had conducted tours to Sulang Longhouse, on the Skrang River. Sulang longhouse had an open-door policy on longhouse tours and there was no restriction on the number of companies that brought in tour groups. According to Mr Fong, this often resulted in overcrowding and customer dissatisfaction. Accordingly, BS moved its operations to the Lemanak River because of increased competition from other tour companies and the growing perception amongst tourists that Sulang longhouse was 'too commercialised'.

Kruse What do you think will happen in the future with longhouse tourism, where do you think it's going to go?

Fong That is quite worrying because when you talk about the culture and all this it's a living thing so it can move in any direction. So far, from what we have seen, we have been moving more to the interior, further and further into the interior to find more longhouses where we can offer the traditional way of life, where we, the tour operator, can sell the culture of the people in the longhouse rather than the modern way of life.

Kruse What about the Katibas River, no good?

Fong The problem with Sibu area, I think so far in my opinion, and I have been through all of Sarawak and Sabah, even the Rajang River and the Katibas River. You see the roots of the Ibans come from Batang Lupar so they move out from that direction. On the Rajang River, you see Sibu grew up as a timber town and there was a lot of lumbering in that area. So a lot of the people living in that area, if they are Iban or the Orang Ulu, they are very involved in the timber, in the lumbering and all this kind of thing and a lot of them don't depend on planting rice as their main living. Without the planting of rice the culture is not so strong. Shifting cultivation is the way of life in the beginning and that is why we sell their culture. So if they don't depend on shifting cultivation there is not much to sell about their way of life- they lose their beliefs.

Mr Fong presents the role of the tour operator as a kind of 'culture broker' who is also something of a commercial anthropologist. He presents himself as committed to that role (although it is not the whole story of his business identity) and he has considerable knowledge and strong opinions. As a cultural broker with anthropological concerns he is interested in the Iban way of life because his business as he defines it is 'mainly selling the culture' and he needs to understand it. For that reason he has been active in travelling through the area and gathering knowledge. He knows the various river areas. He has theories about the relationship between Iban culture of the past and the present, including a theory linking material culture and belief and the idea that shifting cultivation is the basis of the traditional Iban way of life without which the Iban will 'lose their beliefs'. He is also interested in the relations between tourist beliefs and the changing social situation of the Iban. In this way Mr Fong shares the focus of much contemporary concern with cultural adaptation and change.

Nevertheless, while Mr Fong is capable of seeing a broader perspective his focus is on the demands of business at the expense of other interests. In spite of an awareness of the changes involved in contemporary longhouse life his concern is that if longhouse residents vary their lifestyle from the set of fixed characteristics that denote 'traditional Iban' in the tourist industry 'there is not much to sell', or at least not much that Mr Fong is willing to sell. From Mr Fong's perspective, cultural change, although inevitable,

threatens loss of business, unless of course longhouse communities are willing to stage certain aspects of traditional culture for wages. The assumption is that there will be no demand for an altered product and, therefore, there is no reason to offer one.[17] Without traditional longhouses and traditional people (according to the popular understanding of traditional longhouses and people) there is no future for the industry.

At the same time, Mr Fong inadvertently illustrates one of the primary characteristics of the longhouse tourism industry, viz that it combines an appeal to popular pseudo-anthropology with commerce. Mr Fong sees the Iban as a vanishing tribe whose longhouses must be searched for 'further and further into the interior' where 'the traditional way of life' might still survive. His outlook includes a local reformulation of the conventional wild Borneo view of the interior of Borneo as a refuge for unchanged nature and traditional peoples but with the twist that in this instance it is seen as an obstacle to providing tours because of the difficulty of 'finding' such peoples. From his commercial point of view he sees the only alternative as being to promote 'the traditional life' in terms of an historical performance, which he defines as 'to dress up in loincloth to show the tattoos and do the dance'. His commercial perspective reduces the longhouse product to a simplistic, commercial stereotype and a set of consumer clichés.

A sense of Mr Fong's understanding of the term 'culture' is gained from the examples that he gives: 'unique way of life'; 'community way of life'; 'sharing and caring'; 'the beauty of the life of the people'; 'no conflicts'; and 'their beliefs'. Implicit in these comments is the point that longhouse communities are antithetical to modern, urbanised and industrial society - a kind of Disneyesque native world of community solidarity. In addition, it seems that Mr Fong is referring to aspects of longhouse life that he assumes are qualitatively different or unique when compared to the home culture of the majority

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[17] Of interest here is that Mr Fong uses shifting cultivation as a prime indicator of Iban longhouse culture. This is significant because on the one hand, as outlined in Chapter One, swidden rice farming lies at the heart of Iban cosmology, longhouse life and traditional agricultural systems, but, on the other hand it is a farming practice that many Iban and that Malaysians of non-Dayak heritage, see as an indicator of Iban agricultural, economic and social 'backwardness' that retards Iban, and, more generally, Malaysia's ability to modernise and become 'developed' (Jawan 1994:222).

of tourists who go on longhouse tours (although he is incorrect, certainly in relation to the notion that there is no conflict in longhouse communities).

Furthermore, while Iban culture is understood and spoken about as fluid and changing, only certain, primarily historically-based images of Iban culture are valued and promoted by the longhouse tourism industry. For example, when Mr Fong reflects on Iban culture he explains that he finds it 'worrying' that culture is a 'living thing that can move in any direction' and he relates this to his tour company, which he believes will have to offer tours 'further and further into the interior' in order to find suitable (the implication being 'traditional') longhouses for tourism.[18] His perspective is that Iban longhouse residents have limited possibilities for participation in contemporary Malaysian commerce. It seems to me that his account of the longhouse industry involves a very narrow view of the market and its potential. For example, while the Stamang longhouse tours were provided as a commercial product they were much more complicated than Mr Fong suggests. The definition of the Iban contribution as being to dress up, show the tattoos and 'do the dance' overlooks the key role of Iban traditions of hospitality, involving entertainment in the form of performance for guests and notions of reciprocity, including the enjoyment they derive from interacting with tourists, which is fundamental to the dynamics of the longhouse tour product.

Mr Fong's account obscures the role of marketing and publicity by the tour industry in setting terms of reference for the tourists. The irony is that, as a tour operator, he is responsible for the discrepancy between, on the one hand, the market image, the longhouse tour product and tourist expectations and, on the other, the everyday reality of contemporary Iban longhouse life in Sarawak. Furthermore, throughout the commentary Mr Fong does not explicitly discuss how his company markets its longhouse tours, although in paragraph three he remarks that some tourists are 'disappointed' when they visit the longhouse because its physical structure (or elements

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[18] This is not necessarily true, as the appearance and cultural environment of longhouse communities varies for a range of reasons, not just remoteness. With the above comment I suspect Mr Fong was simplifying the point for my benefit and to appeal to the continued belief (especially in the West) that the interior of Borneo stills contains communities unaffected by modernity.

of it) differ from their expectations (this is a point also made by the Masterplan). Mr Fong seems to be trying to deflect any suggestion that there might be a link between the marketing for longhouse tours and any disappointment experienced by tourists when they go on one of his tours by asserting that tourist expectations of longhouse communities are formed from pictures in old books 'twenty or thirty years old' that depict Borneo and Sarawak as 'mysterious, very wild, very backward'.[19]

Finally, although Mr Fong claims to be 'mainly selling culture' in the sense of 'the community way of life, the sharing and caring amongst the people in the longhouse', and 'their culture, their beliefs', the overall focus of his comments is on the importance of tourists seeing a 'traditional' (hence authentic) wooden longhouse (as opposed to a modern concrete and brick one). The drift of his conversation suggests an industry focussed on material culture, the exotic and the picturesque, rather than on social systems, values and belief. Furthermore, Mr Fong explicitly rejects the possibility that modern longhouses could ever be a marketable and successful commodity in the Sarawak tourism industry.

Demong's tourism history

In 1983 the Demong longhouse community was relatively poor in comparison with other nearby longhouse communities and lacked the funds to rebuild or renovate its longhouse in a modern style. As a consequence, Demong longhouse was predominantly made from wood (including hand-cut, wooden support poles in the *ruai*) and was a representative example of older conventional Iban longhouse design (see figures 21 and 33). There was no road and the only access to the longhouse was by longboat or on foot.[20]

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[19] Although Mr Fong acknowledges the wild Borneo content of older texts and asserts that they have created an erroneous impression of Sarawak and Iban longhouse life, as the examples of his marketing discussed in Chapter Five show, his business draws on that perspective to sell tours.

[20] Tour operators consider longhouses without road access more desirable because the presence of a road indicates an easy connection with the wider world and clashes with the message of remoteness found in the marketing. Furthermore, at longhouses without road access a 'river journey' can be incorporated as an essential feature of the tour, providing a link with the earlier established travel itineraries of Western tourists and travellers in Borneo.

In 1986, after three years of trial operations, BS and the Demong community signed a formal agreement that guaranteed the company five years of exclusive tourism access to the longhouse. Following the signing of the agreement, BS arranged for the building of a large, jungle hut-style guesthouse adjacent to the longhouse overlooking the river and regular tours began (Figure 33).[21]

Figure 33: Left, Demong longhouse in 1996. Right, Borneo Sunshine guesthouse in 1996.

In 1991, when the exclusive agreement between BS and the community expired, the residents of Demong decided to build their own guesthouse, in addition to the BS guesthouse already on site. The Demong guesthouse was similar in design to the BS guesthouse, although slightly larger and situated at the opposite end of the longhouse. The new guesthouse was built so that the community could independently host tour groups that were brought in by other Kuching-based longhouse tour operators. The BS guesthouse, which was more extensive and luxurious, remained in place for the exclusive use of BS's tourists. The new arrangement meant that on any given night Demong might host one or more tour groups brought in by other Kuching tour operators, as well as groups brought in by BS. On one occasion when I stayed at Demong, there were two tour groups visiting, including a group brought by BS.[22]

By building a separate guesthouse the community effectively doubled its capacity to secure earnings from longhouse tours, thereby demonstrating significant commercial initiative within the operational parameters of the industry. Furthermore, the initiative

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[21] BS paid for the construction materials and the residents provided the labour.

[22] The irony for BS was that the residents of Demong effectively reproduced the commercial situation at Sulang about which the company had been so unhappy (see footnote 15).

meant that BS no longer controlled the majority of the income coming into the community from tourism and the company lost much of its leverage with the community.[23]

By 1996 Demong longhouse was in need of a major rebuild or replacement. The longhouse had already been old and dilapidated when BS first approached the community in 1983 and 13 years later it was well on its way to falling down. Accordingly, the residents of Demong cleared a large area of land (approximately the size of a football field) behind the existing longhouse in preparation for building a new longhouse (although tours to the existing longhouse continued while the residents prepared and purchased the necessary building materials).[24]

In February 2000 17 *bilik*-families (originally from Demong) began construction of Rumah Uyut, a two-storey longhouse in the modern style constructed from concrete, cement and bricks on the cleared land. Rumah Uyut now stands approximately 100 metres behind what remains of the old longhouse (figure 34, top left). The old longhouse is deserted and has partially collapsed, although some sections remain in use for storing farming equipment. Other sections are slowly being dismantled and recycled into building or farming materials (see figure 34, bottom left and right). In 2001 no agents offered tours to Rumah Uyut.

Around 800 metres up river from Rumah Uyut is Rumah Demong Baru (New Demong) (figure 34, top right). New Demong is comprised of 23 *bilik*-families from old Demong. This longhouse is of a more traditional design, constructed on stilts and predominantly from timber. The exterior appears old and each *bilik* has a façade of split bamboo panels. The *ruai* and *tanju* are constructed from wood and a traditional *tangga* (notched log entry ladder) serves as an entryway. The interior of each *bilik* is noticeably different from the exterior and most are of a modern design complete with modern furnishing and fixtures. The appearance of New Demong is perhaps most succinctly

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[23] For example, while BS held a monopoly on the tourist trade to the longhouse the company was in a position to suggest improvements to the tourism business that it perceived as important. These 'suggestions' included that 'posters and TV ariels are not to be displayed openly at the *ruai* and *tanju*' (see Appendix J, which is a reproduction of a 1991 letter from BS to the Tuai Rumah of Demong).

explained by the phrase 'built new to look old'. BS loaned the *bilik*-families that elected to build New Demong $25,000 MYR towards the construction of their new longhouse, on the condition that the company regain its exclusive relationship with the longhouse.[25]

Figure 34: Top left, Rumah Uyut in 2001. Top right, Rumah Demong Baru (New Demong) in 2001. Bottom left, abandoned old Demong in 2001 (left) with Rumah Uyut (right). Bottom right, close-up of abandoned old Demong in 2001.

Mr Fong explained to me that prior to the Demong residents making their decisions he had written to and visited the community to explain that his company would not continue tours if a modern design and materials were employed in the construction of the new longhouse. When I questioned Mr Fong on this he noted:

> **Fong** If they have in mind to build a new longhouse, for us, because we have an interest in that area, we will definitely negotiate with the native to get a longhouse that can be quite traditional of course with some modern toilet, some modern facilities. This actually for the benefit of the people in the longhouse and for the agency and we will even be willing to invest, to give the people in the longhouse certain money, materials to try to get the people in the longhouse to build the longhouse in the traditional way.

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[24] This was achieved with the assistance of a bulldozer supplied by a logging company that was extracting timber from native customary land owned by the residents.

[25] This money was to be paid back in full, on an interest-free basis, by BS retaining the $10 MYR head tax for each tourist that would previously have gone into the longhouse community fund (see Chapter Six).

Kruse New but traditional looking?

Fong Yes.

The fact that the residents of Demong opted to split the community into two and build separate longhouses raises some significant issues. First, the type of longhouse the community chose to build determined whether or not the tourism business continued and involved a choice about their future in the industry. Secondly, the terms of the choice were not set by the residents but by the longhouse tourism industry. That is, the community was unable to step outside the prevailing paradigm and continue a tourism business in a modern longhouse. Thirdly, the constituent *bilik*-families that chose to rebuild the longhouse in a modern style had to sacrifice additional income from tourism in return for an improvement in their material living conditions and their socal status within the Iban and the wider Malaysian community.

In this instance the allowable choices made by the different sets of *bilik*-families that built the two longhouse had a somewhat absurd outcome: Uyut longhouse and New Demong are less than a kilometre apart. Tourist longboats pass by Uyut on their way to New Demong with Uyut clearly visible from the riverbank. One can hardly miss seeing both longhouses and noticing the differences between them, differences that are further highlighted by the ruins of old Demong longhouse, which can also be seen from the river. Both communities continue to practise the longhouse domicile way of life. However, New Demong attracts longhouse tours and is a tourist attraction because it was built for modern longhouse tourism and not as a modern longhouse.

Nanga Tindin's tourism history

The Lemanak River affords another example of a two-longhouse solution used to resolve the issue of building a new longhouse and retaining a tourist trade. Less than half an hour up river by motorised longboat from Demong longhouse and situated less than 50 metres apart from each other are the two adjoining longhouses, Nanga Tindin Ili (downriver) and Nanga Tindin Ulu (upriver).[26] Prior to 1992 there had only been one

[26] This longhouse is sometimes referred to as Nanga Tindin Atas (above).

longhouse called Nanga Tindin on the site. Nanga Tindin Ulu is a new longhouse built in a 'traditional' style that receives tourists. In 1996 the other longhouse, Nanga Tindin Ili, had yet to be rebuilt (it was the original Nanga Tindin) and did not receive tourists.

In the case of Nanga Tindin the decision to build two longhouses was not precipitated by a longhouse-wide desire for new accommodation but by disagreement amongst residents about the management of longhouse tours, disagreement that resulted in an acrimonious split in the community. A reconstruction of the precise nature of the disagreement is difficult because longhouse residents were reluctant to discuss the matter and tour company personnel refrained from talking about the topic because it was considered an unfortunate event that reflected badly on the industry as a whole.[27] The following account of the disagreement is based on several fragmentary versions related to me by different persons.

The disagreement was centred around two men: Ahmeng, a Sarawak Chinese man who had married into the longhouse; and the *Tuai Rumah* of Nanga Tindin, a local Iban.[28] From about 1990 Nanga Tindin had received tourists brought to the longhouse by several tour companies and there was an open-door policy for receiving tours similar to that in place at Demong in the mid 1990s. Tropical Adventure was the company with the largest share of the market at Nanga Tindin and it was responsible for initiating tours to the longhouse. The manager of Tropical Adventure was a blood relative of Ahmeng. In the months shortly after tours began to the longhouse, tensions arose between the *Tuai Rumah* and Ahmeng over the distribution of labour and payments from tourism. Ahmeng was accused by the *Tuai Rumah* of stealing a percentage of the profits from tourism and not properly distributing funds between *bilik* within the longhouse. Ahmeng's blood ties to Tropical Adventure became a point of contention in the community with some residents suggesting that he was privileging his family

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[27] In every interview conducted with longhouse tour company managers, as well as in discussions I had with senior Sarawak Government figures associated with the tourism industry, I raised the issue of Nanga Tindin. The varied responses included ignoring the question, denying anything had ever happened or refusing to comment, 'I refuse to comment on that'; and 'I don't want to comment but I think it was something to do with management'. The residents of Nanga Tindin Ulu and Ili also declined to comment. In an interview with Ahmeng (who was central to the dispute) his responses focussed on the daily business of running the tours and discussion of the conflict was avoided.

[28] That the disagreement involved an ethnic Chinese and an Iban *Tuai Rumah* is significant. I am not suggesting that race relations should be given primacy of place when seeking to understand the context in which longhouse tours take

relationship with the tour company at the expense of fair dealings with the community, including the community's tourism business.

By 1991 the tensions within the longhouse had resulted in two separate guesthouses being built on land communally owned by the longhouse. Ahmeng and several *bilik*-families that supported him serviced one guesthouse and the Tuai Rumah and the *bilik*-families that did not support Ahmeng serviced the other.

In late 1991 the tensions between *bilik*-families climaxed at about the same time as the *Tuai Rumah's* guesthouse burnt down (there were no tourists staying there at the time).[29] In 1992, just prior to the rice festival in late May and early June (*gawai dayak*), the longhouse split. Ahmeng and several *bilik*-families (the greater proportion) built Nanga Tindin Ulu, with the other *bilik*-families choosing to follow the *Tuai Rumah* and remain in the old longhouse until funds for a new longhouse were available.

The residents of Nanga Tindin Ulu have continued with tourism and the longhouse remains a successful longhouse tour business, with several tour operators, including Tropical Adventure, using the facilities. Recently, because several more-established tourist longhouses have elected to rebuild in a modern style the number of tour companies making use of Nanga Tindin Ulu has increased. In 1996 the situation was different and at least two tour companies refused to use Nanga Tindin Ulu because of the difficulties that had occurred. Some freelance tour guides commented to me that they felt uncomfortable taking tour groups to Nanga Tindin Ulu because of sustained tension between the two communities.[30]

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place. However, race relations are a constant undercurrent in the longhouse tourism industry because of the business/power relationship that exists between Malaysian Chinese-run tour companies and Iban longhouse residents.

[29] Whether the guesthouse was burnt down deliberately or by accident was not clear from the versions of the story related to me. In 1996 the charred remains of the Tuai Rumah's guesthouse were still visible near to Nanga Tindin (Ili).

[30] In 1996 tours to Nanga Tindin Ulu were the cheapest in Sarawak with market forces the major factor in determining the price. Its reputation in the industry meant that mainly inexperienced guides took groups there and longhouse residents cut costs to provide a cheaper product to compete with other more established longhouse destinations. As the longhouse was purpose-built for tourism it lacked some of the trappings of more 'traditional' longhouses and was arguably an inferior 'product' (consequently, the residents were not in the position to charge as much as other longhouses).

Nanga Tindin Ulu's tourism history is unusual when compared with those of other tourist longhouses: while minor disputes in relation to tourism between *bilik*-families in other tourist longhouses were not uncommon, they did not in my experience develop into major longhouse-wide disputes. In Nanga Tindin Ulu the opposite was the case and disagreement over management was the primary cause for the longhouse split. This was recognised widely in other tourist longhouses (as well as longhouses without tourism in the area) and it was for this reason that Nanga Tindin was a taboo subject in the longhouse tourism industry.

The situation that occurred at Nanga Tindin Ulu points to a crucial difficulty with longhouse tourism, namely that while a tour company may have an overarching business agreement with a single longhouse community, any community-wide agreement ultimately rests on the constituent *bilik*-families of a longhouse agreeing to act cohesively in order to manage and make money from the longhouse as a tourism business. To further illustrate the significance of this issue it is worth recalling some of the main features of Iban social organisation, referred to in Chapter One, using a quotation from the Iban scholar Henry Ngadi:

> 'Each [*bilik*] family is an independent unit, with its own family property (*pesaka bilik*) and land (*tanah*). It takes care of its own physical needs, its livelihood (*penghidup*) and its health (*pengerai*), and also meets religious obligations at both individual and family levels (Ngadi: 1998:introduction).

Importantly, in longhouse society it is not the wider longhouse community to whom an individual looks for his or her economic security, but the *bilik*-family. However, the social and religious traditions of *adat* Iban also bind an individual and *bilik*-family to the longhouse community. As Freeman puts it, 'the ritual affairs of any one *bilek* are the indefeasible concern of all other members of the community' (Freeman 1992:128). Nevertheless, traditionally, 'there is never co-operation involving the whole community' because, 'each *bilek-family* is self-sufficient economically' (Freeman 1992:108). Furthermore, Freeman makes the following important observation:

> ...a longhouse community is always to some extent, an arbitrary alliance, for its component *bilek-families* possess kin in many other long-houses, and they can become members of any of these other settlements should they so desire...In general the core group is stable, but it occasionally happens that a longhouse breaks up completely, its component families dispersing to as many as six or more separate and widely scattered destinations. Such instances of disintegration offer striking evidence of the conditional nature of group formation among the Iban, and that in joining a longhouse a *bilek-family* does not sacrifice its essential

> autonomy…[*bilek-families*] have a prescriptive right to decide the whereabouts of their place of abode. This means that the Iban long-house community is an open and not a closed group, for its component *bilek-families* are joined in free association, from which withdrawal is always permissible (Freeman 1992:127-128)

The observations of Freeman and Ngadi underscore the social and economic autonomy of the *bilik*-family and the voluntariness of the *bilik*-family associations that comprise the longhouse community. However, it is these fundamental aspects of Iban society that sit most uneasily with the business imperatives of longhouse tourism. Tour operators privilege and rely on a notion of the longhouse community run as a single business entity and this challenges the independence of the *bilik*-family as an economic, social and architectural unit. For example, as the discussion in Chapter Six shows, *bilik*-families in tourist longhouses are required to maintain their *bilik* to meet the requirements of the 'longhouse business' rather than simply their own housing needs. This may mean that *bilik*-families cannot renovate or replace structural components of the *bilik* using modern building materials, nor can they renovate in a modern architectural style which they may prefer.[31]

Despite the prevailing view that tourism arrangements occur between a tour operator (or operators) and a longhouse community, Freeman's observations highlight the fact that in reality agreement is reached with the *bilik*-families that constitute the longhouse. Hence, a serviceable form of commercial longhouse tourism based on the use of the entire longhouse can only be practically provided to a tour operator while there is accord amongst *bilik*-families on the nature, form and commercial arrangements for the tourism business. This is complicated by the fact that individual *bilik*-families retain the right to withdraw from the business, meaning that it operates with the ongoing uncertainty that any number of the *bilik*-families that make up the longhouse can assert their independence at any time and, in the worst case, leave the longhouse and establish a new one.[32] As Freeman notes above, it is important to stress that *bilik*-families may choose to band together and form a new longhouse at any time. The formation of a new

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[31] For example, at Stamang and Randin longhouses, because of the effect that changes to exterior sections of individual *bilik* (such as the panelling separating each individual apartment from the *ruai*) may have had on the look of the longhouse, the tour operator and Tuai Rumah were concerned to discuss any proposed changes and ensure they were in keeping with the style of the longhouse. In non-tourist longhouses such minor renovations and cosmetic changes to a *bilik* would ordinarily not involve consultation with external parties or the Tuai Rumah.

[32] Leaving a longhouse requires certain *adat* obligations to be followed. See the Adat Iban Order 1993, sections 67-73.

longhouse, comprised of several *bilik*-families attached to a different longhouse, is the way new longhouse communities are commenced. In this context, the two-longhouse solution adopted by the former *bilik*-families of Nanga Tindin and Demong is an example of *bilik*-families exercising their right to leave a longhouse and start a new one.

The situation at Nanga Tindin provides a further example of the contention that tourist longhouses must conform to certain standards of the 'traditional' (or pseudo-traditional) in order to be considered viable tourist attractions and chosen by tour operators for tourism. The residents from Nanga Tindin who elected to continue with tourism and market themselves as a tourist destination had only one choice when it came to deciding the materials and style of their new longhouse. Jeffrey Ukar, an Iban man from the Randin tourist longhouse on the Skrang River who ran his own guesthouse servicing several tour companies and was an experienced manager of longhouse tourism services, described the situation at Nanga Tindin Ulu as follows:

> It [the longhouse] is from wood, so tourists will come but this longhouse is not so good, it is not so traditional. The material is new but the plan of the longhouse is traditional...In Skrang we heard they were fighting and quarrelling.

In this passage, Mr Ukar's suggestion that the quality of Nanga Tindin Ulu as a tourist attraction 'is not so good' reveals another side of longhouse residents' engagement with longhouse tourism, the issue of inter-longhouse rivalry springing from competition to be the best 'attraction' in a small market. When Mr Ukar states that Nanga Tindin Ulu 'is not so traditional' he is implying that his longhouse (Randin) is more 'traditional' and that Nanga Tindin Ulu is an inferior product.[33] At this point, detailed discussion of the unusual architectural style of Nanga Tindin Ulu is necessary.

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[33] Denigrating comments about the activities, performances and architecture of particular tourist longhouses were frequently made in my presence. For example, 'their dancing is not so good in (x) longhouse' and 'they are mean and not so friendly to the tourists in (y) longhouse'. Such comments had a lot to do with how I was perceived in the field and, while this varied a great deal between individuals, many Iban were aware that I was studying longhouse tourism and that I travelled between tourist longhouses. A necessary observation here is that competitiveness between different longhouse communities is nothing new. For instance, at Stamang residents often spoke disparagingly of all the communities on the Skrang River but also joked about this being a longstanding habit stemming from historic rivalries between longhouse communities on the Batang Ai River system and those along the Skrang River. Sather (1993a:80) explores this issue in relation to *sapmakai*, the traditional alliance between longhouse communities on the same river system for the purpose of warfare, defence and spiritual matters. However, the frequency with which Iban vilified each other's tourist longhouses in my presence followed shortly by a request for me to organise more tours to a specific longhouse suggested that a commercial motive often influenced these statements to some extent. In any event, in relation to Nanga Tindin Ulu there may be some truth to Mr Ukar's comments as, in 1996, its reputation in the industry meant that, for the most part, inexperienced guides took groups there and longhouse residents cut costs to provide a cheaper product to compete with other, more established longhouse destinations.

Nanga Tindin Ulu was designed from the ground up with tourism in mind, and the structure and style of the longhouse reveals much about the parameters of a 'suitable' longhouse in the context of the longhouse tourism industry and about local Iban understandings of what these are. The *bilik* that make up Nanga Tindin are an example. The wall of each *bilik* where the front door is situated, and which also acts as the interior wall of the *ruai*, were covered with split bamboo panelling hiding the mixture of milled wood, hand-cut wood and particleboard that formed the structural part of the wall. This is noteworthy because for many Iban split bamboo is considered something of a 'poor man's' building material.[34] Some of this split bamboo panelling, as well as sections of the exterior wall of the longhouse (between the *ruai* and *tanju)*, were painted with brightly coloured traditional Iban motifs. The use of split bamboo panelling along the *ruai* at Nanga Tindin Ulu created a curious jungle hut effect (although it was confined to those parts of the longhouse most frequented by tourists). The *tanju* at Nanga Tindin Ulu was built using a similar approach to that applied in the *ruai* (Figure 35, right). Old pieces of wood were recycled as building material and a selection of old disused wares were hung up and placed at intervals along the *tanju,* including a vintage outboard motor (roughly 25 years old) that had been fished out of the river, old mats, baskets, broken bush knives, and so on (Figure 35, right).

By and large the tourist-visible parts of Nanga Tindin Ulu had a rustic appearance (which reminded me of newly-built country roadside cafes in Australia where old bullock cart wheels and rusting pieces of antiquated farm machinery are placed around the building). In comparison to the *ruai* Nanga Tindin Ulu's roof was made from corrugated iron and the interior of *bilik* (which were not shown to tourists) had modern furnishings, wood panelling and linoleum floors, in a style comparable to most non-tourist Iban longhouses. From the outside Nanga Tindin Ulu had the look of a new longhouse made skilfully with available jungle materials (although most modern longhouses avoid jungle material in favour of modern materials).

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[34] This was pointed out to me a number of times in longhouses when residents were describing how poor they were. The exception is in the construction of farm huts (*langkau*) and other temporary shelters where the use of more sturdy

What needs to be stressed is that the appeal to tourism inherent in Nanga Tindin Ulu's architectural structure is through marketing a fabricated 'traditional/authentic' Iban jungle lifestyle, which is presented as being somehow removed from the modern world and outside the reach of global market forces. Paradoxically, the longhouse residents' skill and commitment to gaining profit from tourism provides an income that they can apply to further participation in the culture of development and modernisation which is part of everyday longhouse life in Sarawak. The further paradox is that it is longhouse tour operators who make this artificial dichotomy between traditional and modern longhouses important in terms of business decision-making (although they themselves draw on distinctions found in traditions of knowledge such as wild Borneo and the popular discourse on the development).

For Iban the division that tour operators draw between tradition and authenticity and modernity and development is not always so clear and involves change and continuity over time. Indeed, the longhouse lifestyle continues as an evolving combination of all these things, including the coming and going of different business opportunities such as organised tourism and other forms of commerce. Nanga Tindin's tourism history, like that of Demong's, shows that some *bilik*-families elect to build and live in modern longhouses, and, in doing so, cease their involvement with tourism, despite its possibilities for continued commercial gain. Other *bilik*-families (and some longhouses) elect to construct new-as-old longhouses that ensure their continued involvement with tourism, accepting the overarching parameters of the industry that these signs of modernisation must be obscured by the use of older-style building materials and construction design. In this way, concepts of modernisation, commerce and traditional architecture meld and separate across a range of longhouse community choices about business opportunity and the material conditions of longhouse life.

The Borneo Heartland perspective

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building materials would be wasteful. Similarly, a thatched roof over a *bilik* was considered a sign of poverty but when used on a farm hut was considered appropriate.

Mr H Tang owns and manages the Borneo Heartland (BH) longhouse tour company that takes tours to Nanga Tindin Ulu and Sulang longhouses.[35] In the interview extract below he sets out the aspects of Iban lifestyle, culture and character that he asserts his company markets and that he contends lie at the heart of why tourists should be and are attracted to longhouse tours.

> **Tang** Our advertisement on the longhouse tours we base on the Iban way of living. We find that the Iban people are a very social kind of people, fun loving, they like to share the outside world's information with the visitors very much. So when we advertise in the tour brochure we advertise their culture, their way of living and their communal living, I always tell tourists that it is very difficult to find this kind of communal living all under one roof nowadays. Today if you wanted to see this kind of communal living you can go to the Skrang River...Some tourists have heard from other sources that the Skrang River is very commercialised so we tell them, what is the meaning of commercialised? Later on I find out that they [Iban] had begun to sell things, handicrafts. In fact, many years ago they don't have these handicrafts, in fact we tell them if you can, it is our agency telling them, "why don't you people do some handicrafts" and then you can make some living selling to the tourists, table mat, basket, weaving, carving. So this is what we introduce to them but now this is a problem.
>
> **Kruse** Do you think the tourists want to see the Iban way of life or do you think some of them come to see "primitive" people because they see some pictures where the life looks unchanged, unspoiled, traditional costumes? Maybe they think the Iban all dress with feathers, in loincloths, do you think that happens?
>
> **Tang** I think the tourist will actually know that this is dress up for them. When we tell them that in the evening you will be welcomed by the Iban and they will dress up in traditional costumes, with music and so on. Other than that we don't tell them that you will be able to see them dressed like this every day. So actually they don't come for primitive, we never have this kind of word, as you say, primitive.
>
> I think it is the river journey, very pleasant atmosphere, the river and the friendliness of the people. They don't ask for money, even if you take pictures anyhow you like. So the Iban people don't show any kind of commercialism at all. Any tour operator can bring tourists to any of the longhouses. If you feel that [Sulang] is easier, easily available, easily accessible then you can go there. We don't have any objection. Kenyalang [a Kuching longhouse tour company] is a German, he try to promote Sarawak longhouse as very primitive, never tell them the real thing. We tell [tourists] yes they have TV, black and white TV, they use battery charging in Betong once a week $4 MYR, they have radio. We tell them the important thing is to see the communal living, the river journey is interesting and the people are friendly.

Mr Tang's comments begin with reference to the promotional material produced by his company to market his longhouse tours, which he states is based 'on the Iban way of living...their culture, their way of living and their communal living'. This is an evasive statement, as he makes no mention of how the Iban are pictorially presented in his brochures and, like Mr Fong, he describes the Iban in language that does not identify any of the material aspects of 'their culture' that are featured in the advertising and during the tours. As discussed in Chapter Five, his company's advertising material is

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[35] I discuss Sulang's tourism history in further detail below in the context of Stamang's history.

not noticeably different from that of any other Kuching-based longhouse tour operators (or that produced by the STB) and contains the usual references to remote longhouse communities and the familiar array of imagery showing stereotypical wooden longhouses and Iban in traditional costume. The left hand image in Figure 35, which is the front cover of a Borneo Heartland brochure, is an example.

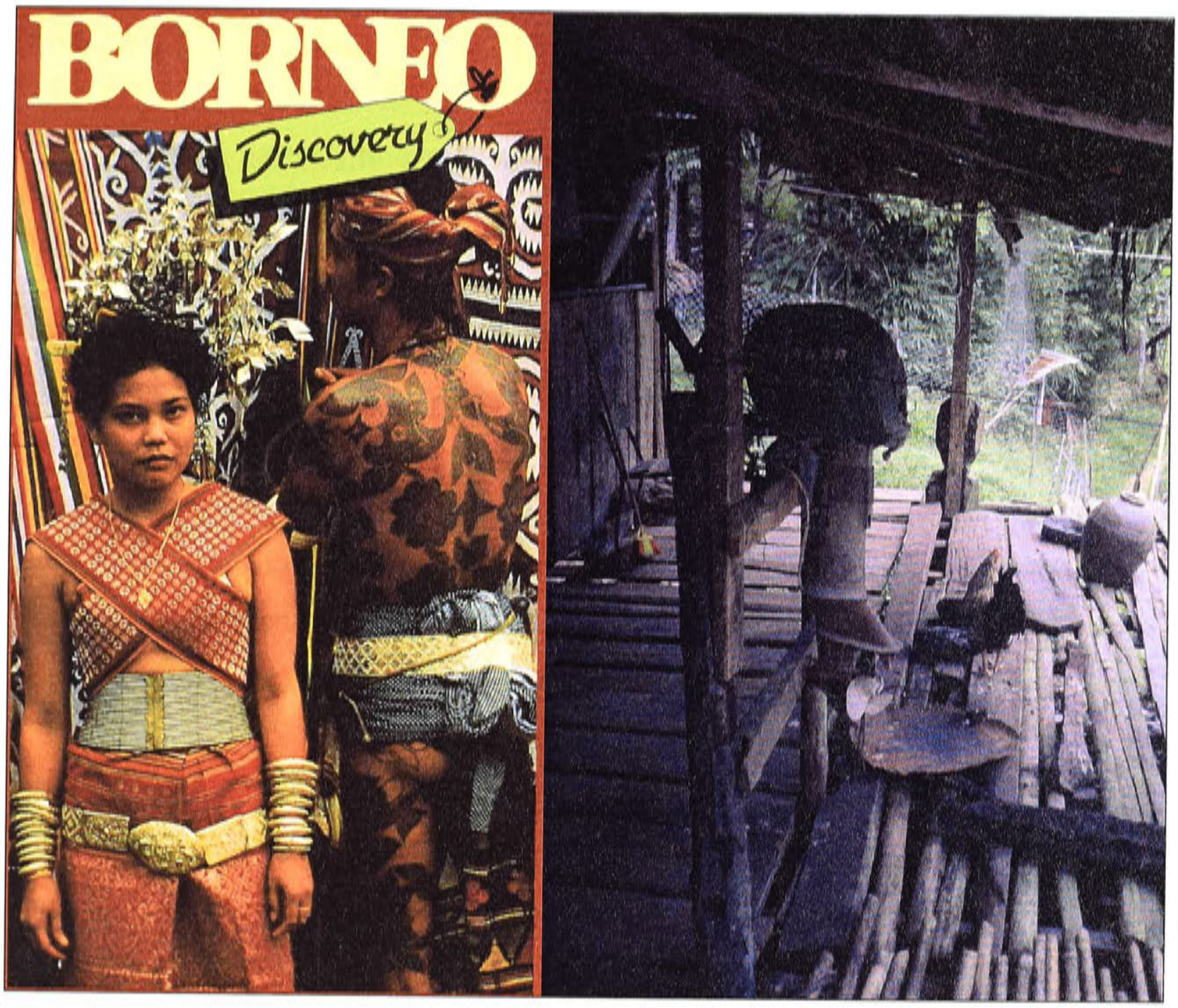

Figure: 35 Left, front cover of Borneo Heartland brochure. Right, vintage outboard motor on displayed on *tanju* at Nanag Tindin Ulu.

Later in the discussion, Mr Tang goes on to suggest that the longhouse product that tourists purchase when they go on one of his tours is comprised of 'dress up' with 'music and so on' and the 'very pleasant atmosphere, the river and the friendliness of the people'. However, he concludes this line of thought with the statement, 'So the Iban people don't show any kind of commercialism at all'. Mr Tang seems to be attempting to reject the notion that he encourages the idea of the primitive when selling his tours

and to demonstrate that he portrays the Iban as unique people who happen to live in an especially picturesque and exotic location and who are remarkable for their 'communal living'.[36] The implication is that if the Iban were overly commercial it would detract from their uniqueness as people, which Mr Tang claims is one the main reasons for and attractions of his tours. Such concerns are longstanding in the longhouse tour industry. Kedit expressed fear of 'over-commercialisation' in his tourism report from 1980 (Kedit 1980:29).

Mr Tang does not clearly define what is meant by 'commercialism' as it applies to the Iban and he raises the issue himself when he asks 'what is the meaning of commercialised'? Despite this Mr Tang's use of the term seems to indicate that he is not referring to longhouse community's business relationship with his company. Instead, he uses the term pejoratively to describe changes in the way the Iban interact with tourists, including shifts away from friendly social behaviour he associates with customary codes of hospitality. This might include a decrease in resident's willingness to spend time with and talk to tourists outside the programmed events of the tour and more obvious attempts at seeking financial rewards from their interaction with tourists, such as pressure selling handicrafts.

In my view, a further aspect to Mr Tang's comments is a competitive concern to convey that, on his company's tours, tourists do not complain about the commercial behaviour of longhouse residents, something that occurs widely in the tour industry. However, this is contradicted by his explanation of how his company introduced handicrafts into the tour program only to find that it is now 'a problem', suggesting that perhaps tourists are not satisfied with that aspect of the tours his company provides.

Mr Tang's comments highlight the difficulty that longhouse tours are, at base level, for both the operator and the community, a cash-based, commercial enterprise. However, their format and style is designed to suggest that longhouse residents are involved in tourism due to a combination of 'traditional hospitality' and a hospitable curiosity about

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[36] This is a common misrepresentation and, in my observation, it is often linked with an assumption that Iban longhouse society is a kind of crude indigenous socialism.

outsiders, particularly foreigners, made more acute because of the remoteness of the communities from urban centres.

Clearly, longhouse tours are not promoted as a visit to a specially-built traditional longhouse where residents dance and entertain visitors for money. However, at the commercial level this is precisely what some of the tours involve (such as at New Demong, and Nanga Tindin Ulu). The 'problem' in relation to residents selling handicrafts that Mr Tang refers to above is the tension between maintaining the business relationship necessary to sustain longhouse tourism, a desire which his company and longhouse residents share, and the balancing act of selling tours that package Iban longhouse culture in a way that suggests the opposite. This is made more complex by the diverse and shifting views on precisely what 'traditional', 'authentic', 'modern' or 'commercial' Iban culture actually is. The force of the limited history of ideas associated with wild Borneo is towards a narrow interpretation of the Iban as non-commercial, simple, jungle people, which is easily challenged in the tourist setting by obvious signs of commercialism such as residents selling handicrafts. Yet, in my observation of tourists how they interpret longhouse residents selling handicrafts varies widely, some viewing it as unwanted 'commercialism', which they perceive as not traditional or not authentically Iban, while others perceive it to be a legitimate feature of longhouse life in the modern world. Other Iban behaviour, such as disinterest in tourists, is frequently interpreted as a sign of commercialism and that traditional ways, and thus the community's authenticity, have been 'lost'.

In the final paragraph of the interview Mr Tang makes the point that longhouses such as Sulang where he takes his tours have an open-door policy and that his company does not have a monopoly on tours to particular longhouses. In relation to Sulang longhouse his comments are accurate, as the longhouse is popular with a range of tour companies.[37] Mr Tang goes on to state that the Manager of Kenyalang Travel (a competitor tour company) promotes Sulang as 'very primitive, he never say the real thing' and contrasts this with examples of how his tour company explains to tourists that Iban are not

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[37] In terms of income generated from tourism, Sulang was one of the most successful longhouses in Sarawak. Its success was partly because of its traditional appearance and partly because it is close to the jetty at Pias (therefore

'primitive', 'yes they have TV...they use battery charger...they have radio'. However, the reality of the situation is more complex. In 1995 Kenyalang Travel requested that during tourist visits the residents of Sulang refrain from using portable radio-cassette decks, televisions, mobile phones and other electronic devices and that they remove or cover up the numerous louvre windows along the wall separating the *bilik* and the *ruai*, using either traditional textiles or wooden panels.[38] Mr Tang is aware that this occurred (as is almost everyone involved in the longhouse tour industry), yet he omits to mention that the alterations made to Sulang to suit the demands of Kenyalang Travel equally benefited his company, Borneo Heartland.

Mr Tang's comments must be considered in the context of the ongoing commercial environment in which tour companies compete for trade. Discrediting the intentions of a rival company is a useful tool in an industry where the distinction between rival products is difficult to determine. In the case of Sulang, with its open-door policy, both companies sell their tours based on the same location. Longhouse residents wear the same costume and perform the same dance for all visiting tour parties and on some nights they will perform a single combined dance program in front of several tour groups brought to the longhouse by different tour companies.[39] The product marketed by both companies is essentially the same and the fact that certain aspects of a longhouse may not match with the current market image that attracts tourists is of concern to all companies bringing tourists to Sulang Longhouse.

Iban agency in longhouse tours does not extend to influencing the prevailing operational model of the industry. Of course longhouse communities are in a position to choose whether they enter into a commercial arrangement with a longhouse tour operator (or operators) but they are not in a position to initiate a business relationship without first being selected as appropriate for tourism and propositioned by a tour operator. Once a longhouse community becomes involved in commercial tourism they have effectively

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easy and cheap to access by longboat), has ample accommodation and the residents and Tuai Rumah were skilled at managing large numbers of tourists (seven longhouse tour companies regularly took tours there).

[38] In effect, this required residents to permanently cover the windows, because the popularity of the longhouse ensured that tourists were present almost every day and night.

[39] This situation occurs only in the longhouse communities serviced by several tour companies, such as Sulang and Randin on the Skrang River and Demong and Nanga Tindin on the Lemanak River. At Stamang the community had an exclusive agreement with AOS so there was only ever one tour group at a time visiting the longhouse

accepted the major terms of, and their specialised role in, the longhouse product. Furthermore, once a tour company has developed a tour product package in conjunction with a particular longhouse (including, for example, the community building a guesthouse and the operator advertising the tours and printing brochures) the community's ability to change the terms of the business relationship and the format of the tours is weakened. Building a new longhouse can allow a community the chance to redefine its business relationship with a tour operator. However, that is also limited by the focus of the industry and the dominant role of the tour operators.

The JDT Travel Agency perspective

From about 1985 to 1999 Jungle Discovery Tours (JDT) had an exclusive arrangement to take organised tours to the Lembat longhouse community. The following passage is from an interview with Mr Simon Chia, manager of JDT:

> **Kruse** What about the advertising you use, the pictures and the way you advertise the longhouse tours - how do you think that influences what tourists expect to see in the longhouse?
>
> **Chia** You see we have a lot of advertisement [showing a brochure with images of a wooden longhouse and a resident posing in traditional costume]. We don't use pictures without permission.
>
> **Kruse** Do you think tourists expect to see this type of thing [pointing to another brochure picture in the brochure of a resident dancing in traditional costume].
>
> **Chia** We are afraid if they come they will get a very bad impression. We have a lot of agent who do a lot of publication but they overdo it, and when they come here they [tourists] expect to see a lot of river, a lot animals and this and that. When they come on the tour we have to explain to them [tourists] that native they stay in the river for many years and they do a lot of farming around the house so you cannot expect to see big tree and rainforest. We tell them if you go deep in the jungle (maybe two or three hours) you can see big trees and primary forest.
>
> **Kruse** I still see on the Skrang a lot of tourists expecting to see "primitive" longhouses and complaining when they see an outboard motor and complaining when they see a television. Do you have a lot of problems with this?
>
> **Chia** They are still coming, they spend about three days and they go to Sabah and see the orang-utan there.
>
> ...We informed them that they must keep to the traditional way, the culture, don't lose the culture. Especially some of the young one they don't have any tattoo on their body, only the old one. If the old one die it means it lost, gone. We have been in this business for over 30 years and I remember that we predict another five years that there will no more tourists coming here because the Iban are getting very modern but the tourists keep on coming, maybe the advertisement work. It because of the advertisement. We have our counterpart in Singapore and Singapore people think that Kuching people live in trees. They don't even know where Kuching

is, they couldn't bother with Kuching, they think Kuching is jungle place, they never realise Kuching is very modern.

Kruse Do you think longhouse tourism has any future, where will it go?

Chia I don't know, it is very difficult. This is what we predict a long time ago,another five years there will no more tourist coming to see the Iban. After 30 years we still have tourist coming in. We predict that maybe another ten years on the Skrang River all the longhouse built of concrete that will be the end of longhouse tourism. In Kuching it is very difficult to see longhouse any more.

Mr Chia repeats the commercial perspective stated by Mr Fong. He echoes the conservative view that Iban traditional culture is passing, its survival is in danger and that the continuation of the longhouse industry is problematic for that reason. His view is that the industry is in danger of coming to an end and his prediction is remarkably close to Hon's similar claim from 1989 (see Chapter Three) but without Hon's vision for replacement tourism involving 'well planned theme parks or cultural villages' (Hon 1989:278). Like Mr Fong, Mr Chia evades responsibility for the marketing style of his longhouse tours and the claims it makes for the product he sells. For example, he claims to be concerned about the excesses of the marketing of other operators, yet his own marketing fits the standard pattern. The interview reflects a wider Asian perspective about the wild in his assertion that Singaporeans see Kuching residents as backward and as people who 'live in trees'.[40]

Mr Chia's remarks further demonstrate the problematic relationship between the marketing for longhouse tours, what tourists think they will see on a tour and the reality of present-day Iban longhouse life in Sarawak. His message is clear: most tourists are ignorant about contemporary Iban longhouse life but the version of it depicted in the marketing works because it keeps tourists visiting longhouse communities. On the one hand, his statement that tourists get a 'bad impression' underlines the issue of the ambiguity of the marketing and the longhouse tour product. This, in turn, plays into tourist ignorance of Sarawak and Iban longhouse life. However, on the other hand, Mr Chia knows that longhouse tours are a tried and trusted product and in the absence of a

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[40] On many occasions in Sarawak I heard similar comments about how West Malaysians, Singaporeans or the Malaysian Federal Government perceived the Sarawak population as a whole or specifically the Iban. Furthermore, occasionally in tourist longhouses, when residents considered that tourists or the tour company were being superior or condescending, they would use phraseology such as, 'they think we have just come down from the trees' and 'they think we live in trees'.

competing product his longhouse tours will continue to sell, regardless of their mismatch with contemporary longhouse life (as long as appropriate and willing longhouse communities can be found).

Mr Chia shares the opinion of his colleagues (and of the STB) about what kind of Iban culture sells and what should be the main focus of longhouse tours. For example, he states that it is the 'traditional way, the culture' that is important for the tours, which he then contrasts with a view of the Iban 'getting very modern' that he links with the demise of older men who have traditional tattoos and 'the culture' being 'lost'. With these last comments Mr Chia makes plain that, regardless of how those responsible for the longhouse tour product justify and explain its current format (including the view that it is an accommodating form of tourism that recognises and involves longhouse communities as uniquely modern and traditional communities) the reality is that longhouse tour operators are committed and will only market tours to communities that adhere to, and actively perform, the fixed and limited version of wild Borneo longhouse life that has successfully sold in the past.

Lembat's tourism history

As Mr Chia's comments foreshadow, the tourism history of the Lembat longhouse community on the Skrang River demonstrates how significant the appearance of a longhouse is to retaining tour company interest.

In 1985 JDT signed an agreement with the Lembat community that gave the company exclusive rights for tourism to the longhouse. Prior to 1985 the residents of Lembat had been considering the possibility of building a new longhouse because their then-current longhouse was too small for the expanding population. According to Mr Chia, the structure of Lembat as it stood at that time was quite modern and included machine-cut wood, fibro panelling and modern-style louvre windows, not in conformity with the image of a 'traditional' Iban longhouse typically seen in longhouse tour marketing.

Figure 36: Lembat longhouse in 1996 seen from the guesthouse observation deck.

However, in 1985, once JDT had formalised an exclusive business agreement with the community, the company invested a considerable sum of money renovating the longhouse so that it resembled an older-style longhouse, including a wooden *ruai*, *bilik* and *tanju* (government funding paid for a corrugated iron roof) (Figure 36).[41] In addition to the renovations the company built a large guesthouse overlooking the longhouse. In 1993 the guesthouse was renovated to provide basic, hotel-style accommodation that included beds, tables, electric lights and refrigerators, and a large observation deck facing the longhouse was built (Figure 37, left).[42].

When I visited Lembat in 1996 it was a popular tourist attraction. JDT's extensive networks in the travel industry meant that visits by tour groups to Lembat were frequent (almost daily) and tourist numbers high. An observation frequently made by the residents of other tourist longhouses and tour company personnel, and one with which I agree, was that Lembat was the most 'commercialised' of all tourist longhouses in

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[41] Mr Chia stated that this figure was $100,000 MYR. I would suggest that the figure is exaggerated, given the tendency of Kuching tour operators to talk up the benefits of tourism to longhouses. Considering the extent of the renovations, I would suggest the sum invested would have been closer to $50,000 MYR.

[42] This was considered by some travel agents and guides working in the industry to be too extravagant for longhouse tour accommodation. For example, one rival tour operator commented to me that the changes to the guesthouse had made Lembat 'too commercial'. Until JDT built its new guesthouse at Lembat the industry standard had been a rustic jungle shack-style guesthouse (like that at Demong seen in Figure 33) with mattresses laid out in one room. The idea being that the campsite-style accommodation was in keeping with the adventure theme of the tours.

Sarawak.[43] This was further demonstrated by other features of their tourism services: the limited personal interaction residents had with tourists compared with the tours I witnessed to other longhouse communities, such as Stamang, Demong and Randin; the poor quality of the nightly dancing, which involved two male and two female dancers parading in the *ruai* while loosely flapping their arms in time to the music, followed directly by a 'photo session' in which tourists were invited to pose for photos with the dancers; and the size and scope of the night market held for tourists in the longhouse in which a resident from each *bilik* set up a 'stall' laid out on a mat in front of their respective *bilik* (see Figure 4, Chapter Three and Figure 32, Chapter Six). The artefacts for sale were predominantly store-bought, including an impressive selection of Indonesian-made (mostly Balinese) tourist trinkets and generic 'primitive' figurines. The prices were up to 100% higher than those in other tourist longhouses. The nature of the relationship between the residents of Lembat and tourists had become 'commercial' because it increasingly involved less and less interpersonal communication and care for the non-income related benefits derived from interacting with tourists. Host/guest interaction had been reduced to little more than the elements of the scheduled performance for tourists and the sale of handicrafts for income.

The lacklustre dancing and the retail store approach of the 'night market' demonstrated that while Lembat residents were accustomed to and proficient at the commercial parameters and possibilities of longhouse tours and their role within them, they may have also been 'fatigued' by tourists and indifferent to them. Nevertheless, their involvement through JDT was contingent on a very basic set of terms in relation to the style of the longhouse in which they were required to live. In 1996 Mr Chia had the following to say about this issue:

> **Kruse** At [Lembat] they are building a new longhouse, is this correct?
>
> **Chia** Not yet, they have levelled the ground and they have promised us that maybe after five years and that maybe they won't build at all.

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[43] Tour company personnel used the term 'commercialised'. Longhouse residents occasionally also used that term but also said *'sida ngiga duit ajar'* (they only seek money) or *'sida sakit gila duit'* (they are crazy for money). These statements by Iban were made in the context of indicating to me that the speaker considered host/guest interaction without some form of hospitality as an inappropriate way for communities to engage in longhouse tourism. Accordingly, they suggest differences of opinion amongst Iban about the appropriate way to combine longhouse codes of hospitality and tourism business.

Kruse And concrete?

Chia If they build in concrete I say "very sorry" but we will have to move to other places. We have to, if they use concrete we will get into serious trouble.

Kruse Why, because tourists won't come?

Chia Yeah, but we spend a lot of money and we try to help them but if they don't listen to us then of course we don't want them to be backward. Then the Tuai Rumah has to ask "what you want to build in concrete for if you have money better you buy a terrace house in Kuching or Sri Aman".

Kruse The Tuai Rumah said this?

Chia Yes.

Kruse But if they build in concrete the tourists will not want to come because tourists want to see a traditional longhouse.

Chia Last time they used to be on the side of the river near a spring. You see last time [Lembat] longhouse used to be quite modern in structure. They have cast iron, wood panelling, zinc sheet and even now they use a lot of zinc because the government used to supply it free of charge. Then they moved to the other side of the river and they build an antique longhouse about 32 doors. It is the longest one on the Skrang River I think. When the tourists arrive on the Skrang River and they see zinc they feel they have been cheated but later one, when they goin the longhouse, the inside still the same, still traditional.

Kruse Do you think they will build in concrete?

Chia I hope they don't but it is up to them. You cannot stop them but if they want money they must keep it that way. Some of them say "we want to buy a house in Betong [a nearby town] and we can keep this longhouse".

According to Mr Chia, if the residents of Lembat decided to rebuild in a modern fashion ten years of company involvement would end abruptly. The 'serious trouble' to which Mr Chia refers is the loss of his product, which would necessitate an immediate search for a new one in some 'other place'. He does not consider changing the style of the product he sells.

Mr Chia's comments acknowledge Iban instrumentality in the longhouse tour industry, such as in the comment 'but if they don't listen' and his reporting that the Tuai Rumah had suggested that residents stay in their current longhouse and buy housing in Kuching.[44] Mr Chia expands on this complication by relating aspects of the tourism

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[44] This point assumes that residents' income from tourism was large which, as Chapter Six shows, was not necessarily the case. I heard talk in tourist longhouse communities (in relation to other rival tourist longhouses) of residents owning houses in Kuching and Sri Aman that had been bought with profits from tourism but I suspect almost all of it was rumour. I know of only one resident from an Iban tourist longhouse who had a house in Kuching but he was involved in small business (including driving a taxi and acting as a middleman in the Iban handicraft and antiquity trade). Guides and tour operators sometimes included in their spiel to tourists mention of residents owning

history of Lembat, explaining that previously the residents at Lembat had built a longhouse that appealed to tourists.[45] But his commentary concludes with the blunt observation, 'you cannot stop them but if they want money they must keep it that way [traditional]'. This last comment underscores the role that tour operators have as arbiters of traditional Iban culture in the context of tourism and their commanding situation in relation to their ability to deliver income to a community. That the tour operators are largely Sarawak Chinese is a defining factor of longhouse tourism.

Despite its popularity, by 1996 Lembat longhouse was in need of major renovations, as well as construction of additional *bilik*, because the community had continued to expand in the period since the longhouse was rebuilt in 1985. To that end a large area of land behind the longhouse had been cleared for the construction of a new longhouse (Figure 37, right).

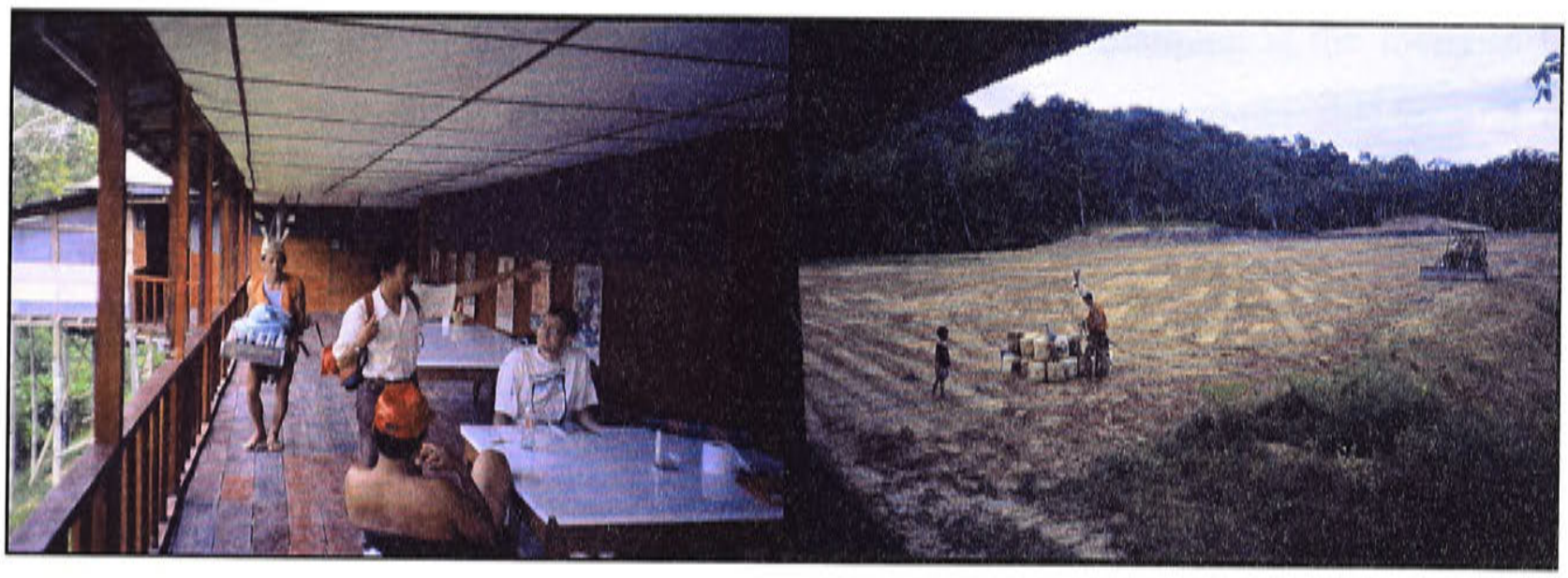

Figure 37: Left, observation deck at Lembat guesthouse in 1996. The man in the image on the left is dressed in traditional costume for tourist work. Right, land cleared in preparation for the new longhouse at Lembat in 1996. The man in the image on the right is preparing for a tourist blowpipe demonstration.

In 1996 the Lembat community and JDT were engaged in ongoing discussions about the architectural style for the new longhouse. Like Demong, the residents of Lembat were aware of the style of longhouse required if they wished to continue with tourism. This

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houses in Kuching or Sri Aman as evidence of the benefits brought by tourism, meaning that such stories were constantly being recirculated and evolving into a standard longhouse tour industry mythology.

[45] An interesting alternative view on the reasoning behind the Lembat residents' decision to rebuild their longhouse was provided to me by an Iban tour guide who commented, 'they are fed up with tourism. [JDT] is bringing them there. So now they are making a good longhouse for themselves, and they have built a dirty one for tourism, not like a clean one, like long ago it was dirty'. As noted in Chapter One, many Iban associate modern longhouses with better hygiene and desire them for that reason.

had been made clear by JDT management throughout the time the community had been involved with tourism.

By 2000 the old longhouse had been pulled down and replaced with a concrete longhouse. JDT no longer maintains a business relationship with the Lembat community and the community no longer receives longhouse tours. JDT now takes its tours to Nanga Tindin Ulu.

Stamang's tourism history - Asian Overland Services and the adoption

This section examines the Stamang longhouse community's history in tourism in greater detail than was provided in the previous examples, since Stamang is the focus of the documentary account of a longhouse tour provided in the previous chapter and the primary field site. This section combines analysis of the tourism history of the Stamang community with comment on the distinctive 'adoption' marketing campaign that AOS used to promote its tours to the community. Stamang's tourism history underscores the argument that the peculiar limitations and expectations of the longhouse tourism industry are fundamentally mismatched with the reality of present-day longhouse life and further demonstrates that Iban have little power or control over the material conditions of their longhouses if they wish to remain involved with tourism.

The Stamang case shows that, despite residents' skill with the tourism business (including an understanding of the role of hospitality), the business relationship was ultimately defined and controlled by the tour operator. Furthermore, the analysis of the AOS marketing for the tours to Stamang illustrates the extent to which tour operators distort the underlying commerce of the community/company relationship to define a model of longhouse tourism appealing to wild Borneo themes while also attempting to remodel and market the longhouse as a safe, hygienic tour destination. The Stamang case also highlights the significant element of inter-ethnic relationships involved in longhouse tourism, in particular, Malaysian Chinese tour operator paternalism towards

longhouse communities and their contradictory view of the Iban as both primitive attraction and business partner.

Stamang in 1996

As outlined in Chapter Six, Stamang longhouse as it stood in 1996 was situated on the Engkari River approximately two hours upriver by longboat from a jetty that floats next to the Batang Ai hydroelectric dam wall.[46] Stamang was (and remains today) one of the least accessible longhouses on the Engkari River and, prior to the construction of the hydroelectric dam, it was a full day's travel (around ten hours) by longboat from Lubok Antu, the nearest town. Until recently, travel to Stamang was only possible by longboat or on foot and in 1996-1997 the river was still the main means of access to the longhouse. In 1996, as part of a land deal with a logging company, an access road was bulldozed through the jungle to the riverbank opposite the longhouse.[47]

The longhouse had been rebuilt a number of times in the same location over the previous century with the last major reconstruction taking place in 1977 (pers.comm.Tuai Rumah Sunok). As the longhouse stood prior to mid-1997 the entire structure and its surrounds were similar to the picturesque, ramshackle, jungle longhouses shown in tour brochures and other promotional material produced about longhouses and Sarawak. The relative poverty and remoteness of Stamang had meant that, prior to tourism, residents were unable to gain access to many modern building materials, such as bricks, concrete and milled wood. The longhouse superstructure consisted of hand-cut, hardwood poles and the entire structure rested on wooden stilts raised about 20 feet above the ground (Figure 38, left). The *ruai* was also built largely

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[46] In 1996, the longhouse was comprised of 35 *bilik* and had a population of approximately 200 people. During *Gawai*, the rice harvest festival that is celebrated every year over a period of around five days extending over May 31, the population increased by around 100 for a period of about two weeks, as family members and friends travelled to the longhouse to celebrate the festival.

[47] The agreement with the logging company to supply a bulldozer was similar to agreements reached by other longhouse communities such as Lembat longhouse on the Skrang River and Demong longhouse on the Lemanak River, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, and the practical reasons for using time-saving heavy machinery are obvious. The road was not sealed and during the wet season it could only be used by four-wheel drive vehicles (this was still the case in 2001). The road was six hours from the nearest town and wound an indirect path through logging camps, with no fuel available along the way. During my many stays at Stamang I saw only two vehicles arrive at the longhouse: a logging truck fetching water; and a Toyota Land Cruiser, driven by the owner of the logging company, who came in to talk to Tuai Rumah Sonuk about buying land. None of Stamang's residents owned a car or a motorbike.

from wood (Figure 38, top right). Pigs, ducks and chickens were still kept under the longhouse and the customary entrance, consisting of a single carved wooden log shaped in human form (*tangga*) was in place and in daily use.

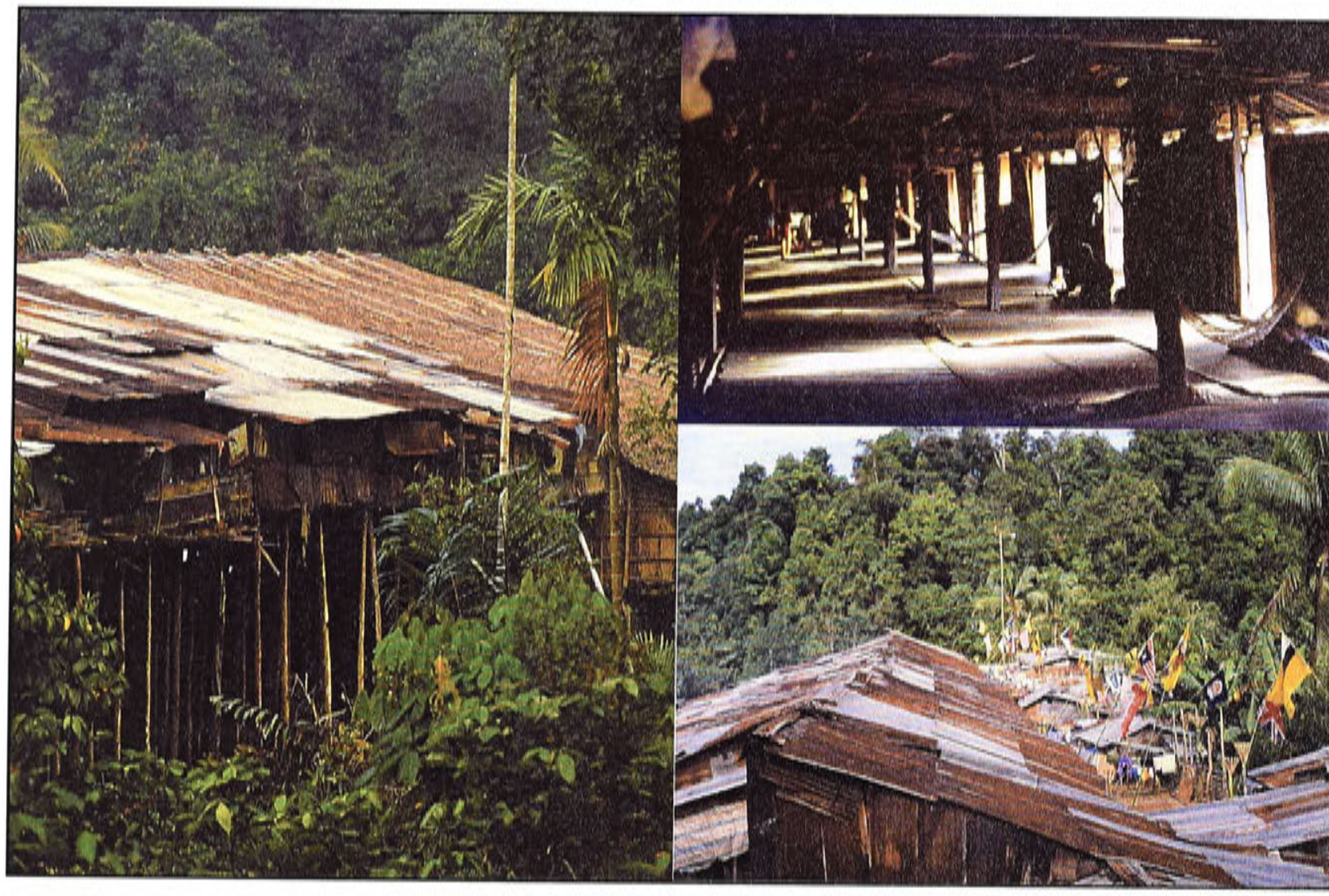

Figure 38: Stamang in 1996. Left, rear view of Stamang showing stilts supporting *bilik*. The portion of the roof that is not made from corrugated iron is for the purpose-built tourist guest bilik.[48] Top right, interior view showing a section of the *ruai*, the doors on the right lead to the *tanju*. Bottom right, longhouse decorated for Gawai with flags attached to the *tanju*.

Until 1997 the majority of residents still followed Iban religion and the longhouse had a resident *manang* (traditional healer or shaman).[49] A number of residents were active, skilled traditional dancers and many older residents (including the *Tuai Rumah*) were heavily tattooed (for example, see Figures 11 and 12 in Chapter Four, showing Stamang residents in the Malmo Museum exhibition catalogue).

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[48] This image of Stamang is taken from the Malmo Museum catalogue discussed in Chapter Four.

[49] The majority of the Stamang community have now converted to Christianity. This took place shortly after the old longhouse was pulled down and the new longhouse completed. An interesting issue is whether, in the eyes of longhouse tour operators and tourists, Christian longhouse communities have less tourism appeal than those still practising Iban cosmology. In my view tour operators favour pagan longhouse communities over Christian ones. For example, conversion may affect whether a community or community members feel comfortable staging a welcoming ceremony involving the slaughtering of animals or whether various rites and ceremonies performed by a *manang* should be included on the program. In addition, not every *bilik*-family or *bilik*-family member within a community may convert at the same time, which further complicates how communities choose to manage staged-for-tourism events that involves pagan activities.

All these factors combined to ensure that Stamang was an ideal longhouse for the kind of tourism experience promised by industry marketing.

The 'adoption' concept and the promotional material

In 1992 the tour company AOS began promoting what it termed its 'adoption' of the Stamang longhouse community. According to AOS's promotional material the 'adoption' was an innovative 'responsible ecotourism project' that allowed for the company to operate commercial longhouse tours to Stamang with minimum disruption to residents' 'traditional' lifestyle and as a means of assisting with community development. As the AOS company profile stated, 'we decided to come up and start a new concept whereby not only will it assist and preserve the way of life of the natives of the longhouse, but benefit them as well' (AOS 1996:7).

From 1992 until 1996 AOS made extensive use of the 'adoption' idea in promotional material selling its tours to Stamang. Over the same period the tours and the adoption received positive coverage in the Sarawak and peninsular Malaysia print media and in STB promotional material (after 1995) and received some overseas media coverage.[50] In 1993 (the year tours began in earnest to Stamang) AOS received several local and international tourism industry awards including the 'gold award for best tour operator' at the Tourism Malaysia Awards (awarded by the Malaysian Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism) and the 'travel award for best in-bound tour operator in the Asia-Pacific region' (awarded by the Asian business group).[51]

To market its tours and the adoption concept AOS produced a range of promotional products. The products (all of which were in English) included glossy brochures (such as the one at Figure 20, Chapter Five), a five-page 'fact sheet', a web site (which is no

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[50] These included: 'And now for agro tourism', in *The Star* 19 September 1994:24, 'Tourists appeal to longhouses: keep your rustic charms please' and 'gem of a longhouse at Batang Ai', in *Discover Sarawak Magazine* May 1994:11, 'Local-born Dutch lady marries Iban-style', in *The Borneo Post* 6 December 1992: 8, and 'A day with the Ibans' in *Sunday Style* 16 January 1994:21-22. In 1996 Stamang was filmed by Swedish TV 4 and received coverage in Swedish and Norwegian newspapers.

[51] A list of the awards that AOS received in the period 1992-1996 is included as Appendix K.

longer in operation) and a company profile booklet.[52] The fact sheet was the most detailed of the promotional devices, as it was designed for tourists to read as background information once they had commenced a tour.[53] The following 18 points outlining AOS's approach to its adoption of the Stamang community are reproduced from the fact sheet:[54]

1. Get local understanding – usually the elders (iron out pros and cons).
2. Have patience and spend time talking to everyone to get majority consent.
3. Expose them to the importance of ones own culture e.g. bring them to museums and cultural village, if any.
4. Tourism must not disrupt their local life-style especially during the rice planting/harvesting months. During this period bring in outside workers to assist in their work.
5. Facilities made available must benefit everyone i.e. the whole community and shared by the tourist – no double standards.
6. Food eaten should be bought from the locals and not imported in.
7. General improvement of health takes place with improvement of utilities such as sewage system, water supply and garbage disposal.
8. Improve communication, transportation and safety of place– purchasing mobile phone, boats and engines.
9. All this taken into consideration, the practitioner must come forward and spend monies up-front to assist these people first.
10. Visits should be regulated i.e. not daily and minimum 2 nights or more so as not too disrupt to their life-style too much. A criteria to limit the number of visitors each time – carrying capacity.
11. Tourists should be briefed thoroughly on how to behave, what they bring along and what can't be brought. Discourage alcohol, smoking and improper dressing. They have to live with the basic facilities i.e. together with the people, their noise and smell.
12. Written information should be distributed before and after visit for more details on handicraft and as a memento.
13. Get involved in the local activities such as planting padi, fishing, picking snails, collecting ferns, weaving etc.
14. Because of tourism, old craft traditions are being revived e.g. the making ofbark cloth by the men to be worn as loincloth and sleeveless jackets. Wildcat skins are being sewn into shoulder caps to use dances (such customs have not been seen by the young ones of the longhouse). Traditional musical instruments are also being madeuse of.
15. Tourists are also buying high quality authentic souvenirs of Iban material and culture which are sold at high prices.

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[52] The approach that AOS took in encouraging students and researchers (including myself) to review the adoption project and report on its progress (as noted in Chapter Two) was also a promotional exercise.

[53] As web sites are cheap and easy to develop, one might assume that AOS's web site devoted to its adoption project would have provided the most material on the tours and the adoption. However, the web site was of poor quality and provided only a small selection of longhouse pictures, some brief material on the adoption concept and information about how to contact the company and book a tour. A new AOS web site is operating in 2002 (www.asianoverland.com.my). Unlike the defunct site, which focussed only on the tours offered to Stamang, the new web site is devoted to promoting the company's complete suite of travel products, including longhouse tours. These new tours are not to Stamang (or for that matter to any other newly 'adopted' community). Instead, the tours go to longhouse communities (such as Nanga Tindin Ulu) that have commercial arrangements with several tour companies. The web site includes reference to the Stamang adoption as positive publicity and the presentation suggests that the adoption is a continuing project.

[54] The 18 points above have been numbered for readability. There are numerous grammatical and punctuation errors in the text. In order to make the quotation reader-friendly I have not marked the errors individually with the standard reference 'sic'.

16. Guides play an important role. They should be able to communicate and pass on knowledge they have of the Ibans in such ways as to be more informative and entertaining. Guides must also be receptive to the reactions of the host and guests and take the necessary steps to ensure a balance relationship.
17. The tourist must be provided with general cultural information of the Iban'sway of life, customs, belief, condition, requirements, facilities and exact description should be given.
18. Natives have a right to say NO! to the tourist during cultural events and funerals.

The extract suggests that in its involvement with Stamang AOS was less interested in commercial tourism than in pursuing a philanthropic project for the cultural and economic benefit of the community. It is an extreme example of the highly marketable view that responsible cultural tourism can act as a panacea for lack of development and backwardness in remote 'traditional' communities while allowing for the preservation of a version of traditional longhouse life.

On cultural matters, the fact sheet confidently claims that, since the adoption, a sudden and widespread revival of traditional Iban arts and crafts had taken place, including the implication that the adoption had encouraged some residents to start making and wearing bark cloth jackets and loincloths and playing traditional musical instruments. This claim suggests that such activities were being pursued at Stamang as part of daily life, rather than solely for tourism purposes (this was certainly not the case in my experience).[55]

On economic and community development, the company's claims are similarly striking, including that the adoption has resulted in improved sewage facilities, garbage disposal, communication, transportation and better general health and community safety.[56] On the same theme in another tourist pamphlet the company claimed that it had established

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[55] The illustrations used in the Malmo Museum catalogue discussed in Chapter Four show Stamang community members posing in bark cloth clothing. Those clothes were worn only for the photo shoot. In addition, Figure 30 in Chapter Six shows Pengulu Rentap wearing a bark cloth jacket, but again the context is tourism work.

[56] It is worth noting here that AOS did in fact institute some initiatives of benefit to the community. For example, in 1992 (prior to the first tours beginning) it assisted residents to install a rudimentary sewerage system to each *bilik* in the longhouse. The company supplied the community with plastic piping and moulded plastic squat toilets and advised on how to install the system. Residents provided the labor. The sewerage system meant that sewerage no longer fell directly beneath the longhouse but was channelled into pits nearby. Similarly, AOS provided materials for the installation of a plastic pipe to bring freshwater to the longhouse from a nearby waterfall, which meant that residents no longer had to endure the laborious task of fetching water by hand. However, during the rainy season the stream from which the pipe sourced its water became polluted with ground runoff rendering it undrinkable, which meant that residents had to collect rainwater for drinking. Also in 1992 AOS purchased and installed four fire-extinguishers in the longhouse and paid for ironwood shingles to repair the roofing of some *bilik*. The company would not pay for metal or corrugated iron roofing as it was felt that it would detract from the longhouse's traditional appearance.

a community store.[57] The initiative (which in fact never occurred) was described as follows:

> AOS is in the final stage of setting up a Community Co-operative shop not only in Kuching but in Kuala Lumpur as well to help promote and sell the handicrafts and products of the natives. The shop will not be restricted to the native of Stamang longhouse only, but will be made available for the natives of the longhouse upstream as well. Thus, this will indirectly help generate income for the natives in that area.

In fact, the points in the fact sheet reveal that the rationale for the adoption and the explanation it provided to tourists were a formal codification of the view that the Iban were a group of primitive people with a special culture that needed to be preserved and that tourism was assisting that aim. For example, the fourth point exhorts that tourism must not 'disrupt their local life-style' and there is repetition about 'cultural information of the Iban's way of life' and 'cultural events' in the last two points. There are suggestions that the Iban are special and vulnerable in a number of ways: they are like wild things and can be difficult to deal with (as in the second point where it is important to 'Have patience'); they are like children who need to be educated (as in the third point); they need to be protected from contamination (no food should be taken in and tours should be minimal in their impact). The first half of the document amounts to a programmatic definition of the Iban in a manner that echoes the conservative pseudo-anthropology at the heart of the tour operator's rhetoric in interviews and the rhetoric of the marketing material. But, in this case, it is presented with the double force of misleading cultural analysis (or cultural propaganda) presented as cultural conservation and philanthropy.

The philanthropy theme is most apparent in Points 4, 10 and 18 of the fact sheet. Point 4 advises that AOS has taken steps to ensure there is no disruption to normal community life caused by its tours (including, if need be, the use of outside workers to assist residents with harvesting their rice crops). Point 10 encourages the regulation of the number of tours to the longhouse and Point 18 makes clear that residents can refuse to host tours 'during cultural events and funerals'. If the company's alleged

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[57] During my time at Stamang, Pengulu Rentap ran a small community store from his *bilik* selling basics, such as tinned meat, soap and noodles. However, it had nothing to do with AOS or tourism.

philanthropic motivations were not sufficiently clear from the enumerated points, an explanatory paragraph in the fact sheet makes them explicit:

> With the AOS concept into consideration [sic] steps were taken to improve through stages the standard of living of the natives by upgrading the infrastructure through AOS's financial contribution. Secondly the bulk of the income from tourism would go to the longhouse, and thirdly, to create an on going awareness and instil pride in preserving their culture heritage from the oldest to the future generations.

Like the tour operators' rhetoric, the terms of the purported adoption of Stamang as a philanthropic cultural project involve a contradiction between the claim that there is a need to preserve a traditional cultural heritage without change and the view that the Iban are backward and need to be raised to a modern 'standard of living' (this is by implication in terms of material culture such as 'infrastructure', although the view is vague enough to suggest that improvements in values and domestic customs are required). At worst the view involves the possibility of strategic deception, misinformation and contradiction and there is a significant similarity between the misinformation of this formulation of a project of benevolent cultural preservation and the deceptive cultural fabrication of the tours themselves. In any event, of the beneficial initiatives that AOS instituted at Stamang, such as fixing the longhouse roof so that it did not leak, supplying lighting and providing a rudimentary sewerage and freshwater system, all were to the advantage of the tourism business and an investment in the longhouse as a serviceable and pleasant tourist attraction and each contributed to making Stamang a competitive attraction in relation to other tourist longhouses already operating.[58]

AOS's attitude to the Stamang community as defined in the documentation was most obviously a patronising one. The fact sheet suggests that AOS was responsible for the 'awareness' and 'pride' community members have in their own Iban 'cultural heritage'.[59] Point 3 suggests that the adoption has 'exposed [Stamang residents] to the

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[58] Other initiatives, such as purchasing fire-extinguishers, protected AOS's investment in the longhouse as a tourist attraction as much as it provided fire safety to the residents.

[59] An interesting variation on this theme is that a regular part of the guides' spiel on route to Stamang in the minibus was the story of AOS arranging (in 1993) for a group of ten Stamang residents to travel to Kuching for a two-day, all-expenses-paid sightseeing trip, which included free accommodation and meals at the Kuching Hilton and a city tour. According to the guides, the purpose of the tour was to provide Stamang residents with a perspective on the environment in which tourists stayed prior to visiting the longhouse (and Western living in general) so that longhouse residents would better understand the behaviour and needs of tourists and their role as hosts.

importance of ones [sic] own culture'. Furthermore, the adoption idea implies that the relationship between AOS and the Stamang community is one of parent and child and that the community requires parental guidance and care. The fact sheet suggests that AOS is trying hard to be a 'good parent', such as in Point 5 in which it is rhetorically exhorted not to have 'double standards', Point 11, in which it makes clear that tourists and guides alike must put up with the 'noise and smell' of longhouse residents, and point 18, which states that AOS will listen to their 'native' charges when they say 'NO!'.

The magazine article 'Tourists appeal to longhouses: keep your rustic charms please', published in *Discover Sarawak Magazine* in May 1992, provides a further example of the theme of the benevolent guiding parent that was intrinsic to AOS's adoption of the Stamang community. In the article, Ngu Ka Sen, a Senior Manager in AOS's head office in Kuala Lumpur (and one of the key figures who negotiated AOS's 'adoption' of the Stamang community) comments:

> Asian Overland adopts the longhouse as one of our own. Helping to provide amenities and better the livelihood of the people is one of the duties of this adoption. In return, we urge the people to maintain their traditions and not to break the magic of the longhouse and their famous hospitality.
>
> ...[at AOS] we're educating the people at Rumah Stamang on the importance of preserving their culture and tradition....We want the villagers to be really hospitable and friendly and not to scramble after them [tourists] only for money or profits, and in their pursuit, forget their normal lifestyle (STB 1996b).[60]

The tone and content of Ngu Ka Sen's remarks in the article are designed to highlight the company's caring, parental approach to the cultural and economic well-being of the community, as well as to downplay the business side of the tours. However, it is clear that adopting the community 'as one of [our] own' required the community to adhere to certain standards of behaviour, namely, staying 'traditional' and avoiding behaviour considered too commercial or unrepresentative of expected codes of traditional hospitality. The flipside of this approach was that if the Stamang community did not follow the wishes of AOS, the adoption would be annulled.

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[60] 'Rumah Stamang' refers to the Stamang longhouse community. In the above quotation, Ngu Ka Sen has used a common abbreviation of the term *Rumah Panjai* or *Rumah Panjang*. The former is the Iban for longhouse and the latter is the same term, but in Malay. Both terms are often shortened in spoken language and used in conjunction with the name of the longhouse, for example, Rumah Stamang, Rumah Randin or Rumah Sulang.

The magazine article is an extreme example of a situation in which the tour operators maintain the circulation of contradictory and misleading rhetoric about traditional culture as part of a business operation in which the sales product is indigenous people who must appear interestingly primitive and lacking in business acumen or tendencies and with the complication that it would be a double business advantage if the Iban remained at the bottom level of development in contemporary Malaysian society. The comments are also an example of the tour operator attempting to define and control the nature of the Iban/tourist relationship by regulating the behaviour of longhouse residents.

The adoption in practice

Despite the rhetoric, in my experience AOS (like every other longhouse tour operator in Sarawak) was first and foremost involved with longhouse tourism for commercial gain. The management approach of the AOS Kuala Lumpur office was that the longhouse was a tourism business and that any problem with the type of longhouse service AOS required was a problem the community must resolve or another service provider would be sought.

Accepting that profit was the real underlying rationale for AOS's involvement in tourism at Stamang reveals how improbable the promotional rhetoric actually was. Based on my knowledge of the way that the longhouse tour industry operates if AOS had actually taken the approach outlined in the fact sheet it would have been impossible for the company to make any profit from tours to Stamang. For example, the suggestion that the number of tours and tourists on each tour be capped (therefore reducing cash flow and profit) and that AOS would pay for labourers to harvest the rice crop (a huge expense considering the size of the community) does not make business sense.[61]

Among the staff of the Kuching branch of AOS with whom I worked closely the 'adoption' idea was rarely mentioned, other than in the company of tourists when it was

used repeatedly as a key catchphrase to describe the company's involvement with the Stamang community. For example, on the way to the longhouse in the mini-van guides often referred tourists to the fact sheet and used the 18 points to explain the central tenets of the adoption concept. On the rare occasions when the adoption was discussed among AOS staff without the presence of tourists in my observation the attitude was that it was a clever marketing concept and slogan.

Despite this, it seems to me that the adoption idea was not only strategic propaganda and knowing misinformation; it encapsulated a genuine view held by many of the Sarawak Chinese majority who own, manage and run nearly all of the longhouse tour companies operating in Sarawak (including AOS at that time) that the Iban are a backward rural people with a child's grasp of business (and modernity) who need guidance if they are to successfully participate in matters of commerce leading to development. (Such views were not at odds with the evident public attitude of the Sarawak and Malaysian governments about the capacity of the Iban and other non-Muslim indigenous peoples for development). Similar attitudes were also expressed by Chinese staff and managers in the antique, curio and souvenir shops near the Kuching waterfront and, in my opinion, are indicative of a wider set of difficulties between Iban and Sarawak Chinese that stem from unequal and different economic and social conditions, both in the past and in the present (Jawan 1994; 1996). In my experience of the longhouse tourism industry negative ethnic stereotyping was a frequent practice amongst Iban towards Chinese and Chinese towards Iban, although both ethnic groups were careful not to denigrate each other directly. The irony of this view is that commercial longhouse tourism relies as much on Iban business skill and their finesse at providing and managing the tour program as it does on the network of travel industry relationships, marketing and capital that tour operators bring to the business equation.

The MOU

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[61] The suggestion that outside workers would be brought in to assist longhouse residents with the planting and harvesting of rice was not instituted and, to my knowledge, was never discussed with residents.

In early 1992, before regular tours to Stamang began, AOS formalised the business arrangements for tours by signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Stamang community. The MOU included the following two notable clauses:

> The longhouse shall be kept as traditional as possible. All materials utilised should be local produce unless exhausted then the materials would be imported from town.
>
> When tourists from overseas visit the longhouse and observe the longhouse, traditional use of materials for making each room/bilik [sic]. The cultural presentation, and customs and tradition to be maintained and relate to the tourists as in depth as possible (Eide 1998:24).

These clauses (while a little unclear due to their awkward wording) represent an attempt by AOS to formalise its relationship with the Stamang community on a *bilik*-family level as well as at the longhouse community level. For example, while the precise meaning of the terms 'traditional', 'cultural presentation' and 'customs' is not clearly defined, what is clear is that AOS was concerned to assert and impose its definition of the suitable form of these concepts on each constituent *bilik*-family within the longhouse community as well as over the social and architectural fabric of the longhouse as a whole. This included a desire to assert control over the residents' relationship with tourists and to ensure that the company's version of appropriate hospitality codes was adhered to by residents As the example of the Nanga Tindin community above demonstrates, *bilik*-family agreement on how tourism business is managed in the longhouse is necessary to successfully run tours and remain in business.

At Stamang these issues were further complicated by differences of opinion within the AOS company structure on how the company should interact with or 'manage' the community. It was clear to me that, from the perspective of the company's head office in Kuala Lumpur, the longhouse was 'one expense' and 'one attraction' among the company's storehouse of tourist attractions throughout Malaysia. However, AOS management and staff in the Kuching branch office realised that it was necessary to engage with the community on a *bilik*-family-by-*bilik*-family basis if tours were to run smoothly. For example, local staff needed to know which *bilik*-families and residents were rostered on for certain activities in order to organise and manage the tourist program. At a broader level, if a member of a *bilik*-family was disgruntled with AOS and the tourism business they could (and did) challenge other longhouse residents about the community's continuing involvement with tourism.

Tourism at Stamang: 1992-1996

Shortly after the MOU formalising the business arrangements between AOS and the community was signed in 1992, the longhouse began to receive regular tours.[62] Throughout 1992 most of the tours catered to travel agents, travel writers and journalists brought to the longhouse by AOS as part of a strategy to establish a market presence amongst overseas (mainly European) out-bound travel agents. On 6 February 1993 Mr Anthony Wong, Manager Director of AOS Malaysia, officially opened two specially-constructed guest *bilik* (for tourist accommodation) which had been added to the downriver end of the longhouse.[63] Regular tours to Stamang began from that date. As Table 3 indicates, from 1992 to 1995 tourist numbers and the length of their visits increased steadily, and in the first six months of 1996 around 1000 tourists visited Stamang.[64] Statistics after June were not made available by AOS, however, it can be safely assumed that, as regular tours continued until the end of 1996, the figure would be well over 1000 for that year.

Year	Tourist Numbers	Average Stay
1992	AOS staff/industry reps only	1 night 2 days
1993	695	1 night 2 days
1994	872	1 night 2 days
1995	789	2 nights 3 days
1996 (Jan-June)	969	2 nights 3 days
Total 1993-1996 (June) 3,325		

Table 3: Tourist numbers to Stamang longhouse, 1992-June 1996.

By 1996 Stamang was a busy, well-known and well-publicised tourist longhouse and in my experience the feedback from tour groups to Stamang was generally positive. AOS was developing a sound profile with overseas out-bound travel agents and AOS and the longhouse residents had been involved in a number of high-profile events. For

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[62] My understanding is that there were some trial tours in 1991.

[63] As has been shown by earlier examples in this chapter, the norm in other tourist longhouse communities was a freestanding guesthouse. At Stamang AOS sought permission from the community to build two additional guest *bilik* added to the longhouse so that the Stamang tour product could be promoted as more 'authentic' on the basis that tourists stayed 'in' the longhouse.

example, as noted in Chapter Four, in 1996 two residents had visited Sweden as part of the joint exhibition *Iban Trophies, The Headhunters of Borneo's Rainforests*, hosted by the Sarawak and Malmo Museums. Flowing out of that event, a Swedish television crew had travelled to Stamang to film the longhouse for a Swedish commercial television travel program.[65] Several Dutch newspapers had published stories on tours to Stamang with the result that Dutch tour groups were arriving more frequently, and Stamang had been 'taken up' by a German travel agent specialising in incentive tours. Day trips from guests staying at the Batang Ai Hilton were common.

However, by 1996 the longhouse was in urgent need of substantial repairs or replacement and some sections had begun to collapse. The *ruai* was beginning to separate and sink into the ground making walking the length of the longhouse difficult. Pieces of the *tanju* had begun to fall away and broken sections were replaced with temporary materials such as split bamboo (as opposed to wooden boards), or not repaired at all. The *tanju* had not been safe for some time and the sharp crack of splitting wood followed by the sight of somebody with his or her leg poking through a newly formed hole was not uncommon. Residents kept a vigilant eye on tourists in case of a fall. The roof was little better; it leaked, much of the corrugated iron had rusted away and many of the *belian* sections (hard wood shingles) had begun to separate from their rattan bindings and fall off. In addition, a noticeable amount of soot, dust and grime had accumulated in *bilik* and a large amount of rubbish had collected beneath the raised floor of the longhouse since the longhouse was last rebuilt in 1977.[66] Rats and cockroaches were an increasing problem. A further consideration was that at the upriver end of the longhouse there were three temporary *bilik* that had been built by

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[64] These figures were supplied by the former Branch Manager of the AOS Kuching office (see Appendix H).

[65] The program was similar to the Australian television program 'Getaway' (and internationally-syndicated versions of it), a lifestyle program devoted to promoting 'out of the way' and interesting travel destinations.

[66] The Kuching Branch Manager of AOS explained to me that some tourists had complained about the rubbish beneath the longhouse, particularly plastic bags, plastic bottles and other non-recyclable items, and that the Iban were ruining the environment. In response AOS organised a longhouse 'clean up day' and called for volunteers from the community. During the cleanup AOS requested that only plastic rubbish be removed from under the longhouse (it was later burnt) and instructed that other rubbish such as broken baskets, worn out mats, and wooden off-cuts should be left. The implication was that the longhouse as a wild Borneo tourism product should not have 'modern' rubbish, that is, rubbish which pointed to the community's involvement in a cash economy and their ability to purchase mass-produced consumer goods.

bilik-families who were refraining from building permanent *bilik* until the longhouse was rebuilt.[67]

As part of the preparations for the building of the new longhouse the residents of Stamang had arranged for a road to be bulldozed through the jungle (as noted above this was achieved through a deal with a logging company). When the road was completed and the work of clearing the land for the new longhouse was finished the residents used the bulldozer to enlarge the small path that led from the landing place and bathing area by the riverbank up to the entrance of the longhouse (see Figure 39). This made carrying goods from longboats up the hill to the longhouse easier and safer and expanded the area available for unloading goods by the riverbank.

When the work was completed Stamang no longer looked like a tourist brochure longhouse situated amongst picturesque jungle foliage but stood surrounded by bare, red, clay-earth on all sides, with a highly visible road on the riverbank opposite which cut its way through the forest into the distant hills.

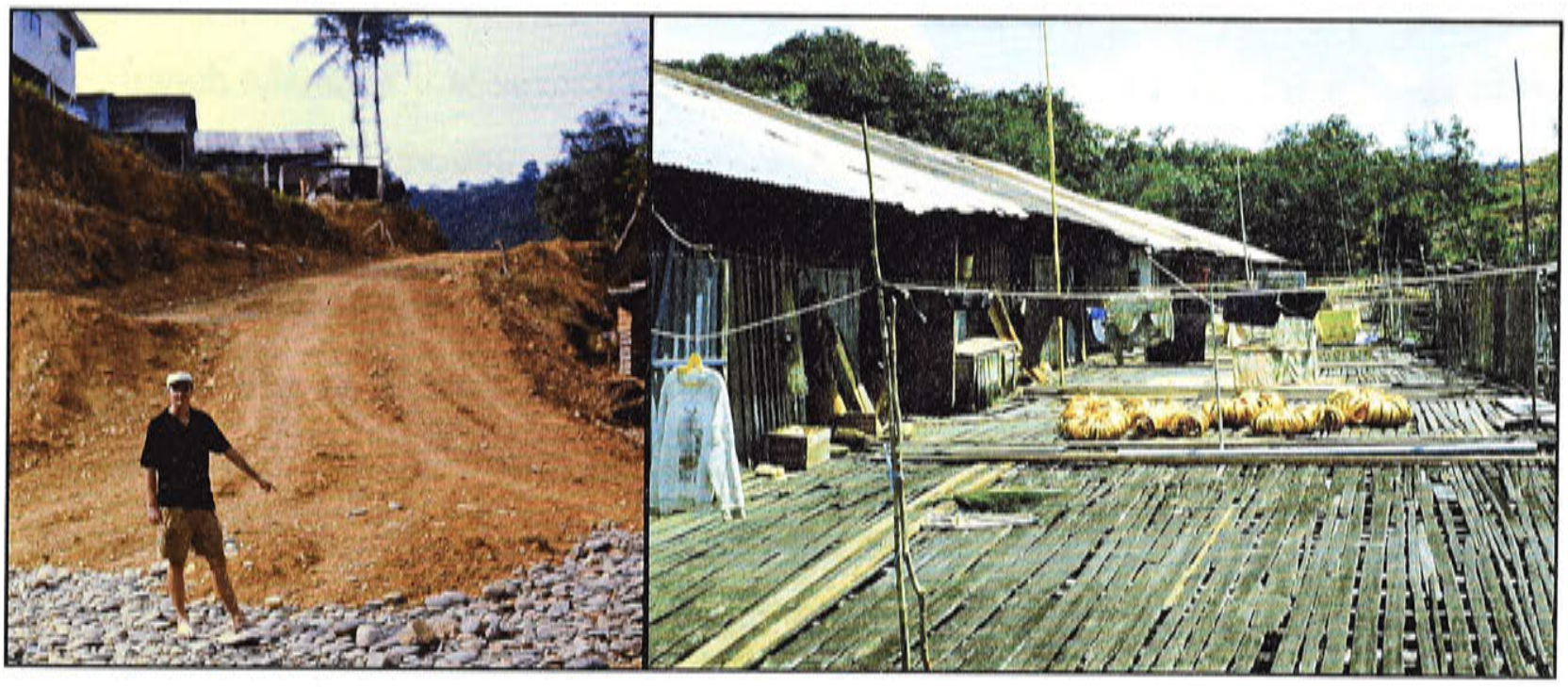

Figure 39: Left, the new road at Stamang shown from riverbank landing place leading up to the longhouse. Right, *tanju* of Randin Longhouse in 1996.

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[67] At the same time as these problems were becoming acute the Sarawak Health Department was campaigning for better standards of hygiene in longhouses and pushing for changes in longhouse design to improve health. I was present in 1996 when Health Department officials visited Stamang to lecture residents on hygiene and health matters such as the dangers of alcohol in the form of home-made distilled spirits (*langkau*) and smoking. Part of the lecture focussed on the view that older-style, wooden longhouses encouraged a lower standard of living (a particular focus was that communities should avoid the husbandry of animals beneath the longhouse, and that new longhouses were more hygienic when built with a concrete slab foundation). Wooden longhouses were also considered by the Fire Department to be a fire hazard (which they are) and concrete or brick longhouses were encouraged as a safer form of dwelling.

Shortly after the clearing work was completed the Branch Manager of the AOS Kuching office visited Stamang to view the changes to the surrounding landscape. An evening meeting was held in the *ruai* (*berandau ba ruai*) with Tuai Rumah Sunok, Pengulu Rentap and a representative (or representatives) from every *bilik*-family. The Branch Manager explained that AOS viewed the flattened land as a problem because the surrounds of the longhouse looked more like a construction site than a jungle (for example, see Figure 39, left, which depicts the clearing work at Stamang longhouse). He stressed that tourists liked longhouses that were surrounded by jungle. Furthermore, he explained that rebuilding the longhouse in a modern style (or even rebuilding at all) would seriously jeopardise the company's commitment to the adoption of the longhouse and that the community was not to make any further substantial changes to the surrounding area without first discussing the changes with AOS.

Pengulu Rentap made clear that any decision on rebuilding and a design for a new longhouse would have to be agreed upon by every *bilik*-family in the longhouse and that a decision had not yet been reached. Eventually, the meeting agreed to a proposal from the Branch Manager that several residents accompany him on a short trip to the Skrang River, paid for by the company, to observe how other tourist longhouse communities had resolved similar issues.

Less than a month later the Branch Manager and eight residents from Stamang, including Tuai Rumah Sonuk (but not Pengulu Rentap who had other commitments) visited the Skrang River on a study tour lasting three days.[68] When I questioned the Branch Manager about the trip he explained that he hoped that the group would return to Stamang inspired to implement some of the architectural solutions that had been employed by Skrang River longhouse communities who had chosen to renovate or rebuild their longhouses in a style that allowed them to continue with tourism.

The Skrang River longhouses Sulang and Randin were selected by the Branch Manager because they had been receiving tourists for around 30 years and because the residents

of both longhouses had chosen to substantially renovate their longhouses in a style suitable for tourism.[69] A brief summary of the salient architectural features of Sulang and Randin in 1996 is useful in order to make clear the architectural options that were shown to the delegation from Stamang.

At the time the study tour group visited Sulang it was a large longhouse comprised of approximately 35 *bilik*-families. It had been renovated in about 1980 and again in 1988. The longhouse reflected the 'traditional' design preferred by the tour industry in that it was constructed mainly from locally-sourced wood, sat on stilts and did not make conspicuous use of modern building materials, with the major exception that the *bilik* were roofed with corrugated iron.[70]

Randin longhouse (Figure 39, right) was almost identical in design to Sulang, although slightly smaller. The residents of Randin renovated their longhouse in about 1984, with generally the same approach as the residents of Sulang, the main difference being that approximately four new *bilik* had been added on to the end of the longhouse. These new *bilik* were made from milled wood and were of a higher building standard than the older *bilik* that had been renovated. In general, the longhouse was of a sufficiently 'traditional' design to make it suitable for tourism. When the delegation from Stamang returned home, the visit to Randin was the most spoken about part of the trip, primarily because Mr Charles Ukar,[71] who was a resident of Randin and ran his own guesthouse

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[68] I did not follow the residents of Stamang on their visit to the Skrang River, although I did visit the longhouses that they studied, Randin and Sulang, independently several times.

[69] At the time Sulang was one of the most popular tourists longhouses in Sarawak. Similarly, Randin longhouse was a popular tourists longhouse and in 1996 had recently been used as a film set by a South Korean television crew making an adventure telemovie about 'headhunters' and 'wild men' of Borneo.

[70] The superstructure was built from ironwood (*belian*) poles that were visible throughout the *ruai*, and the *ruai* was made from loosely-fitted wooden planks tied with rattan. The dividing wall between the *bilik* and *ruai* was slightly more modern than that at Stamang and a few *bilik*-families had made use of linoleum, wood veneer and chipboard in the construction of their *bilik*, although, at the request of tour companies, some more modern sections had been covered with a kind of farm hut-style split bamboo panelling. Each *bilik* had one or two louvre windows facing the *ruai*, however, many of these were covered up with posters, traditional Iban textiles (*pua kumbu*) or old clothes, in response to a complaint from a tour company that louvre windows were 'too modern' and, therefore, unappealing to tourists.

[71] Charles Ukar was effectively the *Tuai Rumah* of Randin although this was not his official position. The Tuai Rumah of Randin suffered from dementia but residents had not convened a meeting to elect a new *Tuai Rumah*. Instead the Tuai Rumah remained in his position and attended to various low impact customary matters, for example, the invocation for a *miring*. But management of tourism as well as *adat* matters requiring a *Tuai Rumah* to adjudicate were handled by Mr Ukar. In addition, Mr Ukar was respected because he was highly literate, had experience working for tour companies as a guide, and undertook occasional work for the Sarawak Museum as a buyer (on commission) of Iban antiquities.

servicing several tour companies, gave a speech to the delegation about managing tourism and how to build a longhouse suitable for tourism.

Shortly after the delegation returned to Stamang an evening meeting was held in the *ruai* so that the travellers could relate their experiences and opinions. The group reported that they were impressed with the size of the new built-for-tourism longhouses on the Skrang, the scale of tourism and the relative wealth of the communities there. The delegation communicated Mr Ukar's insistence that a modern longhouse would end tourism, although it was also acknowledged by residents that rebuilding with modern materials meant that a longhouse could stand for many decades, whereas, as noted in Chapter One, largely wooden longhouses required a rebuild approximately every generation.

Some weeks later I was able to interview Mr Ukar about what he had told the delegation from Stamang:

> I think the tourists are not stupid, they request an original one. As I said to the *Tuai Rumah* of Stamang, if you want them to come it is better you don't break down the old longhouse, but rather stay poor people, but you have the money...The problem is like [Lembat]. The tourists are educated people, if they see two longhouses, they will think you only do business with tourists. It's not your own style, it's not original, they want to see the natural, they know what is a true longhouse...If they want to build a longhouse, yes they can build one. But they must not build a good one, the plan must be an old one, like my people in [Randin], we repair the old longhouse, but like the old plan. All the people agree, I asked the families, 'Have you been happy in the time with tourists about twenty years already? 'Oh yes' they tell me, 'we have income from tourism, pepper, rubber we have a better way of living, we must build a house that is not a good one, because if we build a house like the people in town have, we don't have money because we lose our business'. So all agree, if you have money you can build your own house in Sri Aman, you don't live there but you can rent it, I tell them, that is the way you make money.[72]

Mr Ukar's message to the delegation from Stamang was unambiguous: build a longhouse in the built-for-tourism 'traditional' style of Randin longhouse and tourism and income will continue. Profit was the primary rationale for remaining in housing that was less comfortable and, in his view, suggestive of poverty, and he stressed that the profits that flowed from tourism could be spent on modern investment housing in the nearby town of Sri Aman. In other words, he made a clear distinction between being poor and looking poor for the purposes of tourism.

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[72] The quotation is provided as spoken in English.

It is clear from Mr Ukar's comments that he had a solid understanding of how to do business within the limited, conservative model of longhouse tourism that he had learnt. For example, he saw the views of tourists as central to any tourist longhouse business strategy but he did not appear to consider the role that tour companies play in shaping tourists' views prior to their arrival. He spoke of tourists 'knowing' what is a 'natural', 'true' and 'original' longhouse and, in doing so, he adopted something of the viewpoint of those responsible for the current form of longhouse tourism. Furthermore, the implication was that if longhouse residents provided a tourist longhouse product that did not match with these general criteria tourists would reject the longhouse.

About two months after the delegation from Stamang had returned, discussions began in earnest about what plan to adopt for the new longhouse. The discussions were prompted by a visit from Mr Ka Seng, the Manager from the AOS head office in Kuala Lumpur, accompanying a large group from Kuala Lumpur. Mr Ka Seng convened a special longhouse-wide meeting to reiterate the company's position about the changes to the longhouse surrounds, stating that he felt the longhouse was no longer as 'traditional' as it had been, and that if the longhouse was rebuilt in a modern style continued tourism was in doubt.[73]

Shortly after Mr Ka Seng's visit, Pengulu Rentap showed me plans for a new 'tourist' longhouse that had been drawn up (at his request) by a former resident from Stamang who lived in Sri Aman and had a talent for drafting. The plans (Figures 40, 41, 42) were for a new built-for-tourism longhouse that he and Tuai Rumah Sonuk had decided was the best approach for the community given that there was general agreement that the community wanted to continue with tourism.[74] The new longhouse, as Pengulu Rentap explained, was intended to improve the community's standard of living as well as reflect a traditional design (*'rumah panjai baka dulu menya'*) suitable for

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[73] When Mr Ka Seng arrived at the longhouse he shared his thoughts on the management style of the local Branch Manager who he blamed for allowing the tourism attributes of the longhouse to deteriorate. Mr Ka Seng's remarks were indicative of AOS's paternalistic approach to the longhouse. He stated, 'He [the Branch Manager] should have been present when the bulldozer came so he make sure it did as little damage as possible. If I had been there, I would have directed them in their ideas so that they didn't just bulldoze everything. I would have told them to plant flowers and grass on the flattened land so that it appealed more to tourists. You have to be firm with longhouse people.'

[74] Figure 40 is faded due to water damage that occurred in the field.

continuation with tourism. Although the plans were never implemented, they demonstrate the style of longhouse and salient architectural features that both men felt would be acceptable to AOS and for tourism and they are in dramatic contrast to the modern longhouse that was eventually built.

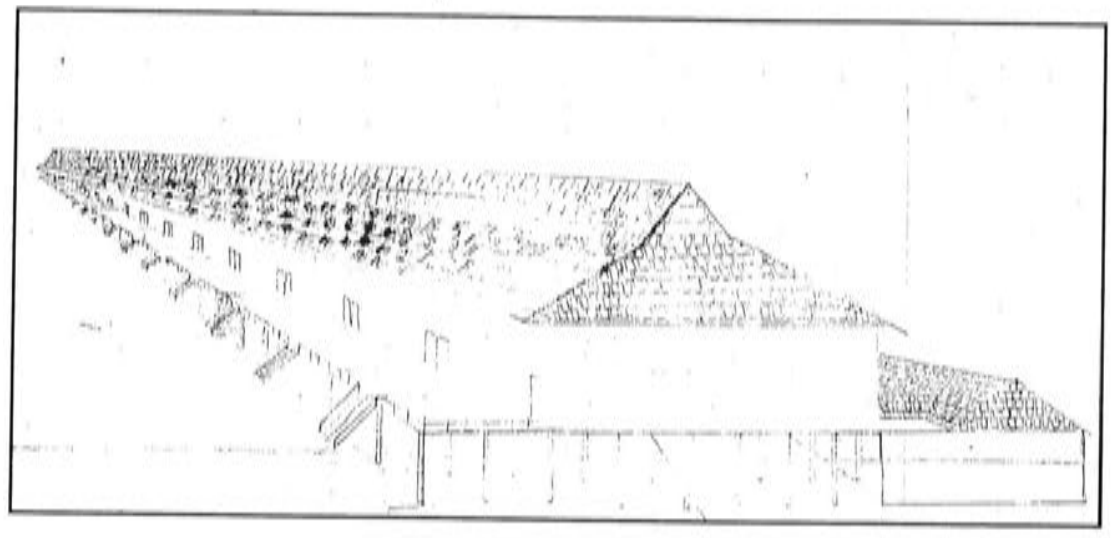

Figure 40: Sketch-plan of the general appearance of the proposed Stamang 'tourist' longhouse.

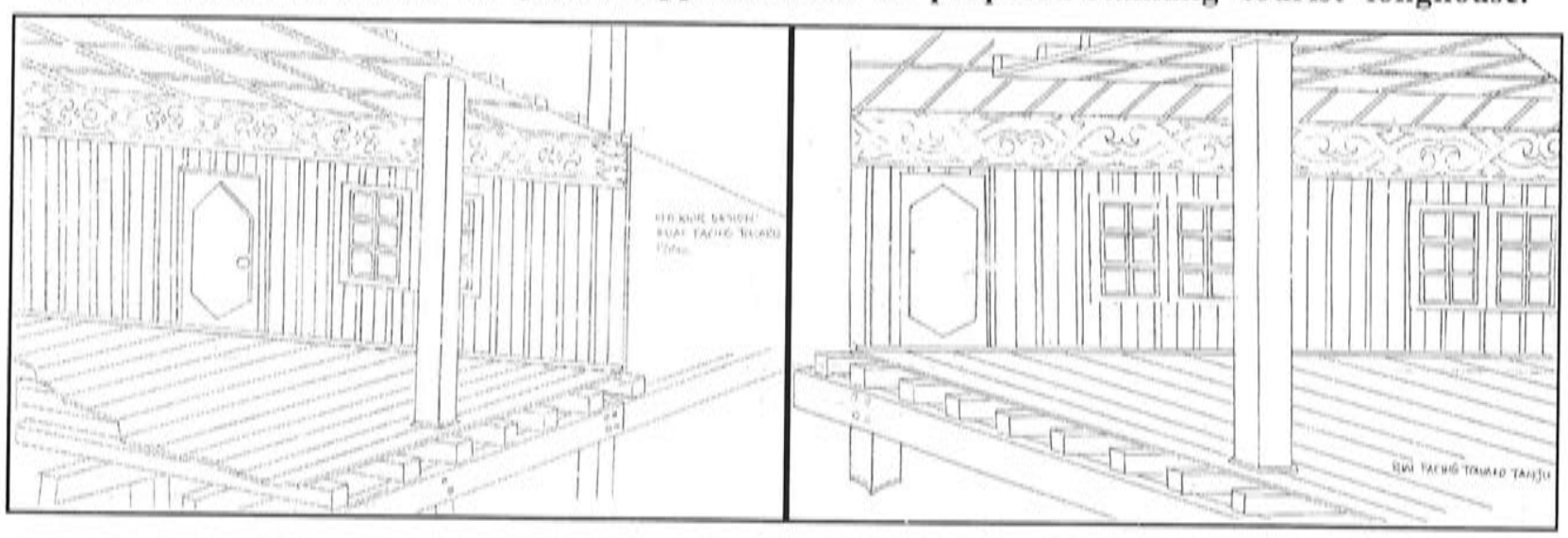

Figure 41: Sketch-plan of proposed Stamang 'tourist' longhouse. Left, interior facing *bilik*. Right, interior facing *tanju* (previous page).

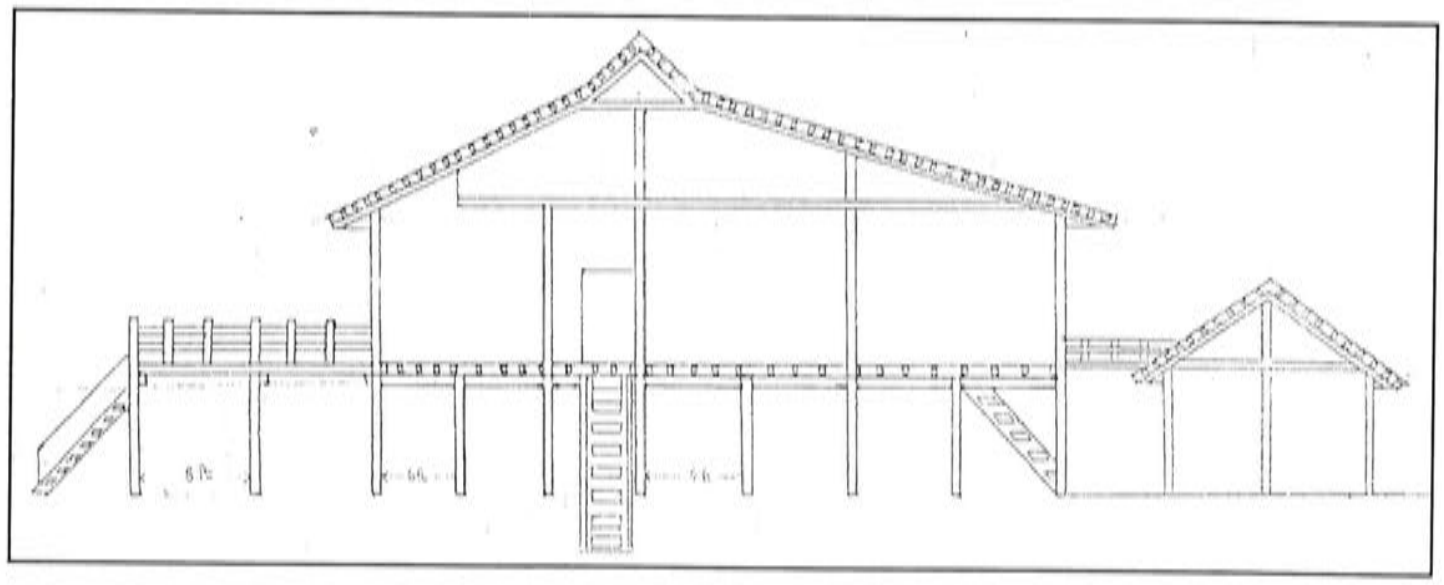

Figure 42: Sketch-plan showing cross-section of proposed Stamang 'tourist' longhouse.

The longhouse pictured in the plans is notable for the fact that its design is neither particularly modern nor particularly traditional. The design is atypical, blending a traditional, *belian* (ironwood) tiled roof with modern, store-bought window frames and

internal walls made of milled, wooden planks painted with Iban motifs. The longhouse also features extended modern staircases (as opposed to a *tangga*), a panelled roof and store-bought doors, yet it is built on stilts. The toilet and shower is a separate structure situated at ground level at the rear of the longhouse, perhaps reflecting the design of longhouses near the town of Lubok Antu that were constructed as part of the Batang Ai Hydroelectric dam relocation scheme. Overall, the longhouse in the plan represents a compromise between the traditional style of longhouse demanded by the longhouse tour industry and the modern longhouses that are now more common in Sarawak.

The design of the *ruai* and *tanju* in the plan is noteworthy because, although wood is the primary material (in line with AOS suggestions), it reflects elements of modern longhouse design that AOS (as well as other Kuching tour operators) had rejected as 'too modern'. For example, in 1991 Mr Ka Seng had visited Rumah Buah Manis Racau (Racau), the next longhouse upriver from Stamang, when he was looking for an appropriate tourist longhouse to 'adopt'. As he explained to me he had rejected Racau (to the dismay of residents) on the grounds that it was too modern because the *ruai* was constructed from milled wood and the *bilik* had store-bought doors and windows.[75]

The tourist longhouse plan devised by Tuai Rumah Sunok and Pengulu Rentap was financially impractical for Stamang residents to fund on their own because the *belian* shingles required for roofing and the amount of milled wood needed to build the interior walls to the standard pictured could not be sourced locally (from local forest reserves) and would have to be bought at considerable expense from a timber company. Consequently, Pengulu Rentap and Tuai Rumah Sonuk presented their plan to AOS with a request that the company provide funding to buy the necessary wooden materials. AOS responded that the company could not afford to pay for the materials but that if government funding could be raised for the longhouse to be built as a 'model tourist longhouse' the company would provide 'some' funding.[76] Pengulu Rentap, with some assistance from the Branch Manager, petitioned the Sarawak Ministry of Tourism for funds to develop the longhouse but was refused on the basis that the Sarawak Economic

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[75] The *Tuai Rumah* of Racau expressed his bewilderment at the fact that Stamang, a poorer looking longhouse, had been chosen over his own.
[76] No amount was ever specified.

Development Corporation had already funded a similar project at the Sarawak Cultural Village.[77]

The end of tourism at Stamang

In early 1997 following Pengulu Rentap's failure to acquire funding to build the purpose-built tourist longhouse, the community decided to construct a modern-style longhouse.

By 1998 the roof and superstructure of the new longhouse, called 'Sri Stamang II', was complete (see Figure 43, below) and residents gradually began to move into it as they completed building the walls and other features of their respective *bilik*. By December 2000, Sri Stamang II was complete. As the images in Figure 43 below show, in 2001 the new longhouse was an imposing structure, approximately 300 feet long, with a bright blue pressed-metal roof, a concrete *ruai*, a mixture of *bilik* made from concrete, brick and composite wood panelling and a *tanju* made from river stones. The old longhouse was left standing and used for storage until mid 1999 when it was eventually pulled down and recycled into building materials, firewood and pepper vine stakes.

As soon as construction began on the new longhouse AOS began to wind down its tours to Stamang. By 1998 AOS had ceased tours to Stamang altogether and the AOS office in Kuching was closed.

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[77] There was some discussion by residents about other solutions aimed at resolving the predicament of improving the longhouse and continuing with tourism. One idea was a modern longhouse situated on the cleared land above the existing longhouse, with the existing longhouse to be left intact as a tourist attraction (an alternative Mr Ukar had said was not appropriate). Another suggestion was to substantially renovate the existing longhouse using as much wood as possible, following the example of Sulang and Randin. A third scheme was a composite longhouse where the *ruai* and *tanju* were constructed from wood and followed a traditional design but the *bilik* and kitchen area (*dapor*) were made largely from modern material and resembled (on the interior) a modern longhouse (similar to the design of Nanga Tindin Ulu).

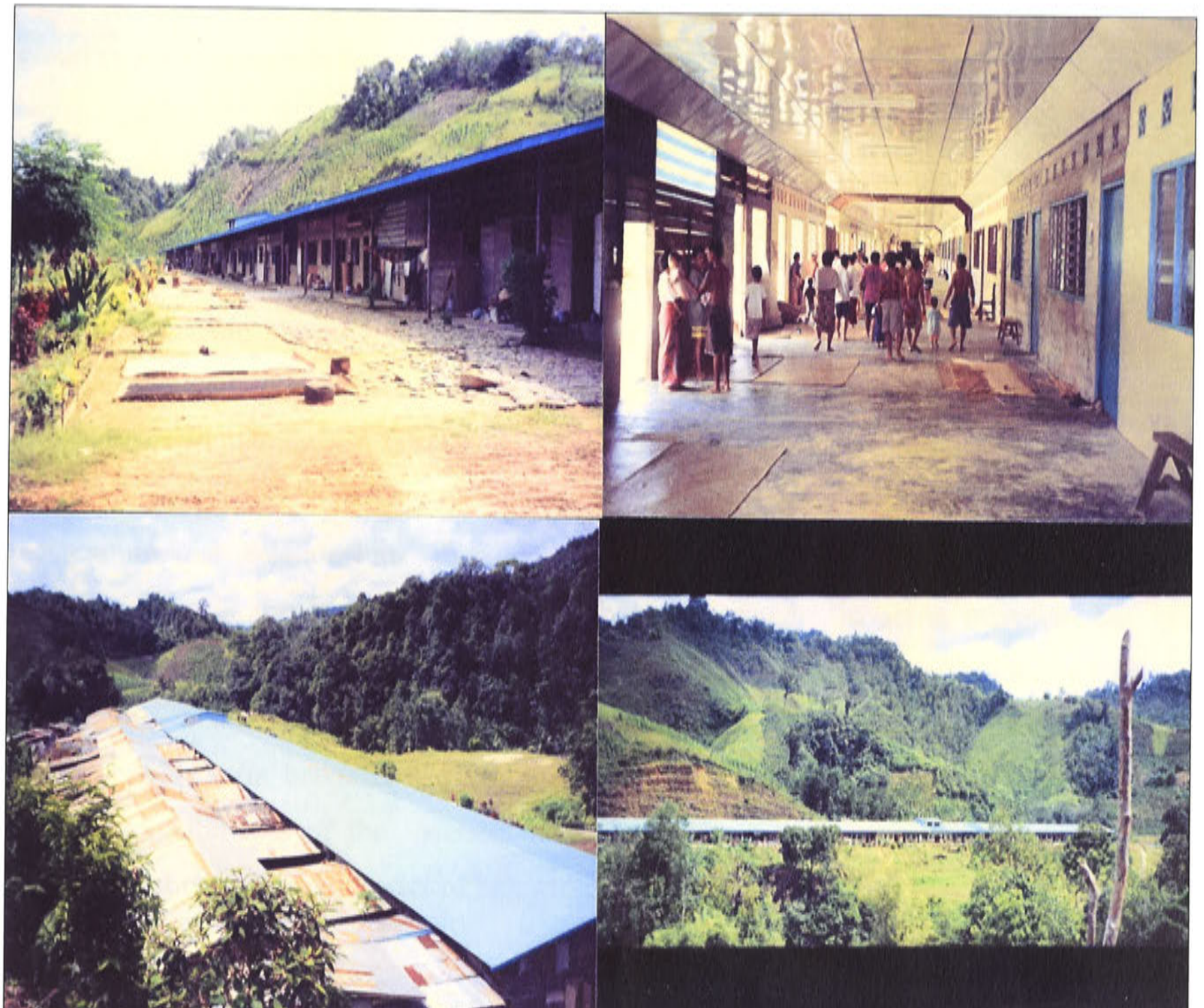

Figure 43: Sri Stamang II. Top left, longhouse view showing river stone and concrete *tanju* and exterior wall to *ruai*. Top right, interior view looking down *ruai*. Bottom left, longhouse roof seen from adjacent pepper garden. Bottom right, view of longhouse from across the river.

According to Pengulu Rentap, during 1999 there was talk of reactivating a tourism venture at Stamang, including constructing a small, built-for-tourism, 'traditional'-style, ten-*bilik* longhouse nearby on the Engkari River. Stamang residents began preliminary work on the project (mainly land clearing) but it was abandoned before the foundations were started. According to residents, this was due to lack of support from AOS.[78] By 2001 the community no longer had any business relationship or contact with AOS and the 'adoption' was a thing of the past. There has been no organised tourism at Stamang

[78] I did not have the opportunity to raise the matter with staff at the AOS office in Kuala Lumpur so I know nothing of their perspective on the issue.

since that time and tourism seems highly unlikely ever to recommence, unless a tour group explicitly requests to see a 'modern' longhouse, which is uncommon.[79]

This chapter has shown that tour operators and Iban longhouse residents are capable of transforming longhouses into a tourist commodity. Tour operators have harnessed particular facets of the tradition of wild Borneo and created a longhouse tour product that is marketable because of its exotic appeal, defensible in the context of modern Malaysia because of its inherent ambiguities and multiple implications, and successful in the international tourist market. While tour operator rhetoric suggests that the product and the Iban are not commercial (or are commercially naive), it is only through the commercial relationships that exist between tour operators and longhouse communities that the longhouse product can be delivered. In some instances the delivery of the product coalesces with general Iban enthusiasm for hosting guests and engaging in social exanges. In other cases (and, perhaps, over time) longhouse residents may be (or become) less enamoured of the social aspects of the product and, on occasion, the role of the 'friendly host' is challenged when tourists unwittingly transgress other Iban social codes of behaviour.

The chapter has also illustrated that, despite skilfully using popular culture views of wild Borneo and the Iban in developing longhouse tours, tour operators construct a limited, conservative and pessimistic view of the longhouse tourism industry and its future. The tourism history of the Stamang community is an exemplary case of the implications of that view. In addition, the discussion has highlighted some of the complexities and problems arising from the *bilik*-family system when the longhouse is managed as a single business. The tourism histories point to a view that some *bilik*-families may prefer a modern longhouse and improved material living conditions instead of living and performing the popular version of Iban culture and wild Borneo.

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[79] According to the former Branch Manager of AOS's Kuching office, in 1999 two tourists requested to be taken to a 'new' longhouse, as opposed to a 'traditional' tourist longhouse, and their guide brought them to Stamang (AOS was not involved). On one occasion in 2000 the Kuala Lumpur office of AOS organised a jungle trekking tour in Sarawak and used Sri Stamang II as the base camp. The group stayed in the longhouse one night either side of their trek.

This chapter has shown that the business relationship between longhouse communities and tour operators is defined by the limits that tour operators impose on longhouse communities in terms of their material living conditions and the codes of conduct they must demonstrate in delivering the tour product. The commanding position of the tour operators and their control of the essential conditions of the industry (including their ability to bring tourist trade and income to a community) ensure that longhouse communities that wish to be involved with tourism comply with the terms of the product and the business parameters within which it operates. Iban desire for modernisation, which is increasing, means the current form of longhouse tourism is proving more and more at odds with the reality of longhouse life.

Chapter 8: Conclusion – developing contradictions

> The tourist quest for the authentic other enables the local elite to use its political, economic, locational, and linguistic advantages to capitalize on the otherness of indigenous groups. That otherness, hitherto seen as a liability and obstacle on the path to progress and modernity, suddenly becomes a marketable commodity. Thus, tourism inevitably affects ethnic relations. Cultural differences are accentuated, reinterpreted, in extreme cases, even reinvented (Van Den Berghe 1995:583).

> We can't keep them primitive for our own amusement. But what can you do? We are losing money and the tourists (Public Relations Manager, Batang Ai Hilton Longhouse Resort, 1996).

Tour operators recognise that the organised longhouse tour industry in Sarawak sits uncomfortably with contemporary Iban longhouse life. They share a concern about whether the tours in their current form will continue to be viable into the future. However, this is not necessarily indicative of a bleak future for longhouse tourism. Instead, it demonstrates a continuing debate between tour operators and longhouse communities about the possibilities of longhouse tourism and the changing nature of longhouse life. The essential conditions and mode of operation of the longhouse tour industry are at the heart of this debate, and this thesis demonstrates that the industry involves a nexus between the changing conditions of Iban longhouse life and the expectations of tourist operators and tourists within the wider context of Malaysian development and global mass culture.

In relation to material culture and traditional daily activities, the current Iban longhouse tours provide a further interpolation into the process of change, including modernisation, that longhouse communities have undergone since the earliest period of European colonisation. The Iban longhouse tour product and Iban reaction to current tourism is evidence of the general dynamic of complex and fluid change which has characterised Iban relations with the rest of the world, particularly in the last 50 years.

The longhouse tourism industry involves a version of longhouse life designed to meet the criteria of a tourist market shaped by the conventions of wild Borneo. At the same time, closer analysis of the industry reveals the responsiveness of all the participants to change, and, in particular, the self-aware immersion of Iban longhouse residents in contemporary commerce and modernisation. In fact, it is one of the more significant paradoxes demonstrated by the research for this thesis that Iban involvement in the

staging of social and material primitivism has proved to be a focus for commercial experience and the formulation of commercial strategies and identities. The converse is also true in some obvious ways. In addition to the restrictions of the staging of primitivism on social practices and identity, Iban are not major participants at the executive levels of the tourism industry and the process of planning and negotiation is from the top down to the Iban communities. But the evidence of this thesis is that the longhouse tourism industry is a focus for Iban experience of Western commercialism and modernisation even at points where it might seem to involve a dead end or even withdrawal by longhouse communities (such as the withdrawal from the tourism market by the Stamang community). Stamang's withdrawal from longhouse tourism was not an explicit rejection of the current form of the industry, although the Iban at Stamang may have misjudged the meaning of the longhouse tour product and its relative inflexibility.

The Western tradition of wild Borneo is crucial for understanding the design and promotion of longhouse tours. Longhouse tours are specifically designed to appeal to wild Borneo themes. This is demonstrated by the tour program of traditional dance, blowpipe demonstrations, gifts to the chief and the emphasis on material culture markers, such as trophy skulls, wooden longhouses and traditional attire. Furthermore, the standard tour itinerary has a distinct heritage in late nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts of travel in Sarawak and Borneo involving visits to 'upriver' longhouse communities, where the 'natives', although reputedly fierce and possibly dangerous, proved to be friendly 'jungle hosts' who were honoured to receive important travellers. The advertising for longhouse tours provides additional evidence of the tours' basis in wild Borneo conventions presenting a picture of unchanging culture, exotic remoteness (from the Western perspective) and ambiguous primitiveness as well as recirculating the idea of the Iban as wild people.

The discussion in this thesis suggests that a desire to visit wild Borneo is a major reason why Western tourists go on longhouse tours. What my research demonstrates is that tour operators and others in the Sarawak travel industry, including government leaders and bureaucrats, believe that tourists desire wild Borneo. Their main evidence and motives for this are that wild Borneo is a well-established Western tradition and that it

sells. Consequently, longhouse tour companies stage wild Borneo with the complicity of the residents of tourist longhouses. The Sarawak Government provides wild Borneo in a neatly-planned theme park (Sarawak Cultural Village) just outside Kuching. Moreover, in the wider sphere of the Sarawak tourism industry, which extends to local curio, art and antique store owners and mainstream hotel, tour and travel agencies, the wild Borneo image is used ambiguously to market a range of products. All this ensures that the current longhouse tour product is set in a complementary tourism framework. Nevertheless, the complicated alliance of government planning and tourism entrepreneurs in developing and shaping tourism assumptions and initiatives also has room for developing contradictions in the longhouse tourism industry. The focus on the tradition of wild Borneo and the idea of traditional culture has the effect that many attempts by Iban longhouse residents to modernise are frowned upon and can result in a reprimand by the tour company that brings business to the longhouse. At one extreme, longhouse communities that choose more obvious signs of modernity are passed over or rejected by the longhouse tour industry. Nevertheless, the evidence here is that the practice of the tradition of wild Borneo in the tourism industry has the complexity that it allows for the inclusion of certain, convenient trappings of modernity, such as outboard motors, electric lights and knives and forks for tourists. These are tolerated by the tour operators because they help to ensure that the wild Borneo experience is not too confronting for the tourists, even when the marketing strategies define a journey into a world without modernisation.

The comments from tour operators and others involved in the tourism industry have shown that the kind of Iban longhouse culture that is for sale on a longhouse tour can be described in different and contradictory ways and with significant ambiguity. On the other hand there is strong evidence that tour operators believe that what matters is that only some elements of longhouse culture will sell as a successful tour culture-product for Western tourists. In that context, the tour operators draw on elements of the wild Borneo tradition to construct a longhouse tour product that can be sold as an 'authentic' expression of longhouse life. They convince tourists and even some Iban about what is authentic and inauthentic in the context of the product. On the other hand, there is the further complication of the trend for tourists to acknowledge the subjective nature of authenticity and enjoy as part of their travel experience the semantic confrontations and

questions about culture that such a viewpoint provokes. Here, as with other main issues, the focus and construction of the current longhouse tourism industry in terms of wild Borneo and traditional culture is set in a wider context of changing ideas and experience which involve sharp contradictions to the limited assumptions and strategies that dominate the planning and marketing of the industry.

There is evidence to suggest that the Chinese in Sarawak, like other ethic groups in Malaysia, are captive to historically-based perceptions of the Iban as backward and primitive, which are reaffirmed by the contemporary national rhetoric deriding ethnic groups and ways of living that hinder Malaysia's quest to become a fully developed nation. The success of the tradition of wild Borneo in global tourism and its wide presence in popular culture and the mass media have reinforced and commodified limited stereotypes about Borneo and the Iban. In this context, there might seem to be few influences that would lead to a re-examination of the dominant conceptual framework and material conditions of the longhouse tourism industry.

A major part of the relationship between tour operators and tourists is mediated and conditioned through the marketing for longhouse tours. Tour operators have the skill and resources to devise wild Borneo longhouse tours and to market them as a component of Asia-wide package tours. This stems from the business networks and economic resources they enjoy as members of the Sarawak Chinese community. In addition, as urban-based, non-Iban entrepreneurs they have the benefit of an outside perspective on the Iban's marketability as a wild Borneo attraction.

Longhouse tourism requires the establishment and maintenance of complex business relationships between tour operators and Iban that also include, as an essential third party, the tourists, with whom the Iban have to interact socially to provide the product. While it is clear that the primary business relationship is between the longhouse tour operators (and longhouse tour companies define the product, advertise the tours, select the longhouses they brought tourists to and negotiate and manage the flow of tourism to the community), on a day-to-day level, residents are required to and demonstrate skill at managing and entertaining tourists during their stay. Nevertheless, in Stamang's case, what ultimately mattered if tourism was to continue was the opinion of the longhouse

tour company (not that of the tourists) about whether the longhouse was suitable for tourism. In another case, it was the opinion of the tour operator about whether the residents were behaving appropriately towards tourists that resulted in a decision to move the tours to a different longhouse. The socio-economic imbalance between Sarawak Chinese tour operators and Iban longhouse communities means that tour operators have the power to define the community's worthiness as a tour attraction. As merchants with a history of mediating commercial and cultural exchange between Iban and the wider world, and because of their superior socio-economic position in Sarawak society, the tour operators have been able to establish themselves as the central force of the longhouse tourism industry, and the industry is supported by the Sarawak Government which is eager to increase Western tourism to the state.

The inequality in the longhouse/tour company relationship was sharply demonstrated by the ironic circumstances of the Stamang community's experience of longhouse tourism. The residents were enthusiastic about providing a good tour product, they enjoyed meeting and entertaining tourists and they wanted to continue with tourism. The tours (while they lasted) were successful largely for these reasons. However, the previous efforts and record of the Stamang community in conducting tourism did not influence the tour company to continue with tours to the new longhouse. It was the tour company that decided whether tourist needs would be met by a modern longhouse.

While tour operators are positioned to identify and inspire tourist desire for wild Borneo they do not have to consider, negotiate and decide on the performance of wild Borneo (in the events which constitute the tourist program at the longhouse) from within the framework of contemporary lived Iban identity. Longhouse tourism brings to longhouse communities a suite of complications about Iban identity, modernisation and development and residents confront these issues when they elect to become or choose to remain involved with tourism.

It is a crucial factor that the residents of tourist longhouse communities are primarily involved with tourism to gain income and profit. However, it is also evident that they are enthusiastic about tourism in other ways, although this can vary both over time and in response to particular social situations. While, on one level, longhouse tourism is a

clear-cut business arrangement between two parties, it has links with (and can form part of) longstanding Iban customs of hospitality and ongoing desire to interact with and learn from outsiders, and, in particular, that interaction is seen as part of the identity of Iban communities within modern Malaysia and global culture. Ironically, the nature of the longhouse tour product as a commercial, cultural and social construction means that there is room for mismatched expectations and understandings between the Iban hosts and their guests, which, in turn, can cause the hosts to behave in a manner that threatens to undermine the commercial enterprise. In part this thesis demonstrates the need for greater understanding by the Iban of the tradition of wild Borneo that shapes their place in the tourism industry as well as the need for continuing research of the issue of Iban understanding of themselves in relation to the Western tradition of wild Borneo.

Longhouse tourism requires a different way of managing and being in a longhouse for residents. It creates the need for the longhouse to be managed as a single business entity and transforms some aspects of the traditional inter-*bilik* relationship within the longhouse. This does not mean a fundamental disruption to longhouse life but rather a reorienting of the economic role of the *bilik*-family so that it is simultaneously a separate economic entity within the longhouse and part of a longhouse-wide business bringing income to the community and to individual *bilik*-families. This realignment in *bilik*-family relationships sees the potential for new kinds of conflict and difficulty within longhouse communities, such as arguments about the aesthetics of a *bilik* or longhouse and its surrounds and confusion and hurt feelings when longhouse adat and the demands of tourism business collide. However, the longhouse as a tourism business allows for longhouse-wide and individual *bilik*-family wealth generation, development, and strengthening of community bonds as a result of the cross-*bilik* participation required to manage and provide the tour product. Even in circumstances where decisions about continuing with tourism and/or redefining the material living conditions of a longhouse community result in the partition of a community, this reflects no more than the continuation of traditional Iban practices of growth and change that include the establishment of new longhouses. In fact, the dynamic of tourism itself provides a context for the adaptation and continuation of certain 'traditional' Iban cultural practices that are now less common in the wider Iban community.

The range of reasons that may underline why tourist longhouse residents decide to rebuild their longhouse in a modern style or purpose-build a special 'traditional' longhouse for tourism requires further study. This thesis has identified how the longhouse tour industry operates and why tourist longhouse communities are faced with such a peculiar problem. In addition, some elements of the context in which communities have made their decisions to rebuild in a modern or traditional style for tourism have been revealed.

There is a general movement among Iban longhouse communities towards modernising the architecture of their longhouses, which is driven by a basic desire to improve their material living conditions (including amongst other things the enhanced fire safety and hygiene of modern longhouses). This dovetails with one of the requirements imposed by the tour industry that tourist longhouses improve their levels of hygiene to make the longhouse more attractive and serviceable as a tourist attraction, but with the complication that it is only allowable to the extent that it does not detract from the appeal of the longhouse as a ramshackle, primitive abode housing underdeveloped native people.

The movement towards modernisation amongst Iban is further motivated by obvious and widespread changes in the general living conditions of the Sarawak population as a whole and (I would speculate) in Malaysia generally. This process is not new or sudden. Longhouse communities have a long and continuing history of change and adaptation, both socially and materially, and the longhouse tourism industry is part of the continuing process of change.

Desire for modernisation and development amongst Iban encapsulates more than a simple wish for changed material living conditions. For example, there is external pressure on Iban from the government, which defines longhouse living, swidden hill rice farming and other traditional longhouse living patterns as backward and at odds with development. The established view is that traditional native lifestyles are synonymous with rural poverty and underdevelopment and hold Malaysia back from its Vision 2020. Alternatively, entrepreneurial business activities, wealth, obvious modernity (such as modern longhouses) and ownership of consumer goods are seen as

indicators of success in developing Malaysia. There are, of course, many Malaysians who promote a more sophisticated discourse on development and modernisation, and government planning, policy and rhetoric is not all on the level of simple dichotomies. However, the popular view has force in everyday discourse and it matters to Iban.

Arguably it is not important whether tourists interpret the longhouse and the tour program as authentic Iban culture, or enjoy it as staged culture for tourism, so long as residents continue to gain income and other benefits that tourism brings. The tour program strongly suggests that the Iban are complicit in a theatrical game of performed culture with the tourists. In this view, the events and activities that form part of the program are make-believe vignettes with the Iban as the principal actors. Purpose-built-for-tourism longhouses are the ultimate in interactive stage design. However, the decision made by some longhouse communities to build modern-style longhouses, including Stamang, in situations where it appears that the intent was to continue with tourism, suggest that some Iban at least are of the view that, behind the dress-up, tourists genuinely want to witness and experience everyday Iban longhouse life.

In my view, part of the explanation for the decision by some tourist longhouse communities to re-build their longhouses in a modern style lies in the fact that, for Iban communities, longhouse tourism is not a stand-alone business separate from everyday longhouse life. Instead, it is inextricably bound up with the pattern of daily life and it is the longhouse. Tourism may bring income and other benefits to the community but it also focuses questions about Iban identity and the meaning of the longhouse in contemporary Malaysian society. Significantly, for those communities that choose to live in purpose-built tourist longhouses the community retains the outward appearance of backwardness and poverty. Furthermore, while some signs of modernity are allowed as part of the performance of wild Borneo extreme signs of the modern conditions of Iban life are not. It is worth recalling here that in tourist longhouse communities residents are expected to obscure many common signs of modern life, including television sets (as well as television aerials on the roof), louvre windows in the *ruai*, satellites dishes, motorised rice huskers and so on. Furthermore, the daily routine of the longhouse involves performances for tourists that rehash past-times and traditions in the mould of wild Borneo in ways that carry a heavy message for the community as well as

the tourists that the community is 'still primitive'. The fact that the community is involved in a performance does not silence the negative meanings of the message for the residents. There is a need for further research of the matter of identity and culture as performance in these circumstances. In my view, longhouse communities that are not involved with tourism do not face those cultural and identity challenges and contradictions in such an extreme way. In a society which, like others, values material achievement and status, living in a modern longhouse has obvious significance: such communities can outwardly display their wealth, status and material achievement by building and residing in a modern longhouse (and with greater freedom for displaying wealth and status and for exploring further cultural transformations).

Living in a tourist longhouse involves a more prescriptive lifestyle than that experienced by the residents of non-tourist longhouses. Longhouse communities must manage their involvement with tourism, which adds an additional layer to the process of inter and intra *bilik*-family negotiation and mediation that is a normal part of longhouse life. An example is the longhouse meetings that are held to discuss the tourism business and which require agreement on matters ranging from managing the longhouse community fund, invoicing, setting the tourist roster and maintaining the appearance of *bilik* and the longhouse and its surrounds.

Perhaps if the income from tourism was greater and allowed residents to forego farming altogether there would be a persuasive case for the style of longhouse living that longhouse tourism requires. However, while income from tourism is significant and can include windfalls from handicraft sales, it is not enough to wholly sustain *bilik*-families and allow them to cease subsistence rice farming and cash cropping. This makes deciding on the overall worth of longhouse tourism difficult for *bilik*-families. One result of this is that *bilik*-families and/or longhouse communities do not always agree on whether longhouse tourism is worthwhile.

Finally, the issues raised in this thesis lead to speculation about whether the current style and mode of operation of longhouse tours will, or should, continue and if so, in what form.

In my opinion longhouse residents would benefit from a change in the way the longhouse tour industry operates. The present arrangements, which see local Chinese tour operators in control of the marketing and the product, has stifled the development of longhouse tours that include an Iban perspective on modern longhouse life. Furthermore, because of the dominant position of the tour operators there seems little likelihood that the product will change. A longhouse community-owned and managed tour company would be a step forward and open up debate about what longhouse tours should be about and include. It might also lead to a closer understanding of the tradition of wild Borneo by the Iban themselves. However, I do not see an Iban-owned industry occurring without government assistance, as longhouse communities simply do not have the resources to set up tour companies on their own. The Sarawak Government appears committed to promoting the current longhouse tour industry and, if the recommendations of the Sarawak Tourism Masterplan are followed, the longhouse model will be further entrenched in the state's broader strategies for promoting tourism to Sarawak.

Would tourists pay for a tour to a modern-style longhouse? A radically different longhouse product would not be successful in the current environment of tourism marketing for Sarawak. Furthermore, given the strength of the wild Borneo view of Sarawak and the Iban it seems likely that tourists will continue to want to visit traditional longhouses with residents who perform as wild people. No doubt some rural longhouse communities will continue to agree to provide such a product.

An approach that has not been tried would be to gradually change tourism marketing to reflect a view of the Iban as a modern people who live in a unique way. This would lead to a better appreciation of contemporary Iban life and allow for a tour product to be developed that is less reliant on the Iban as 'wild people'. Marketing can shift attitudes and expectations over time. In any case, it seems likely that in the future the wild Borneo theme will be seen as a leftover of colonialism, archaic and out-of-date in the context of the changing relationships between local and global communities. Commercially successful tourism to modern Iban longhouse communities may be one result of this.

Appendix A: Questions used during interviews with longhouse tour company owners or managers

1. Name of tour company?
2. When was this tour company started?
3. Who started the company?
4. Who owns the company now?
5. How many staff are employed by the company?
6. What is the ethnic origin of the owner/staff?
7. When was the first longhouse tour started by the company?
8. What area/longhouse did the first tour visit?
9. What longhouses are currently being visited?
10. What is the average group size of current tour groups?
11. What are the main nationalities most often represented in your tour groups?
12. Is group size seasonal?
13. What are the most common age groups represented by tourists using your company?
14. What percentage of your clients are backpackers, middle range tourists, or luxury hotel tourists?
15. What do you think are the most important things a tourist looks for in a longhouse tour?
16. How do you think your company contributes to tourists' impressions of Sarawak?
17. How do you think your company affects the ethnic identity of the longhouse communities you visit?
18. What do you think are the most important expressions of ethnic identity for longhouse community members?
19. Why did the longhouse communities that you visit agree to longhouse tourism?
20. What special facilities had to be arranged for tourist visitors?
21. How often do you visit each longhouse community?
22. How long do you stay?
23. How are the longhouse members paid for their services and how much are they paid?
24. What complaints have you received from the longhouse communities that you visit?
25. What positive feedback have you received from the longhouses that you visit?

Appendix B: Longhouse tour questionnaire

I am a PhD Student from the Department of Anthropology at Australian National University (Canberra). My research is on longhouse tours to Iban Longhouses in Sarawak. I would appreciate it if you could answer the following questions and return them to the folder.

Nationality_____Age/Sex_____Occupation_____

Before you arrived in Sarawak what did you know about Longhouses and the people who live in them?

Did you find out about longhouses in Kuching? If so, how did you find out, i.e. brochure, travel agent, poster, word of mouth etc?

Have you been on a longhouse tour, or to a longhouse on your own? What were your impressions of the longhouse and the people? What was the name of the tour company?

Did you expect the longhouse to be modern or did you expect it to be more or less traditional and undeveloped?

What did you think of the activities arranged for you at the longhouse, for example, dancing, cockfighting, blowpipe demonstration, fishing etc?

Thank you for your assistance

Bill Kruse

Appendix C: Questionnaire for longhouse residents

Nama Rumah Panjai Ditu_____

(What is the name of this longhouse?)

Bilik No._____

Sapa nama orang nulis surat tu_____

(name of the person filling out this questionnaire)

Nama runding nuan penatai temuai ngagai rumah nuan?

(Why do you think tourists come to the longhouse?)

Nama ba runding kita kebuah temuai deka meda gaya pendiau Iban ka dulu menya?

(Why do you think tourists like to see the traditional Iban lifestyle?)

Nama ba runding kita kebuah ngambi gambar leboh sida datai ba rumah panjai?

(Why do you think tourists like to take photographs when they are visiting the longhouse?)

Rindu ka enda kita nerima penatai temuai?

(Do you like or dislike hosting tourists?)

Berapa ulih kita dalam setahun ari penatai temuai, bisi untong?

(How many times a year do you receive tourists? Do you make a profit?)

Nama ba runding kita, nemu kita ngajat enggau ati to berbendar?
(Do you think tourist know if you don't perform the dance properly?)

Berapa hari sebulan nuan bisi kerja enggau turis (temuai)?
(How many times a month do you have work from tourism?)

Kati ba runding kita mayioh enda ka temuai datai jemah ila?
(Do you think there will be more tourists coming in the future?)

Ba runding kita tour operator cukup bayar, ngagai kita ba dagang temuai?
(Do you think that the tour operators pay enough for the tourism work you do?)

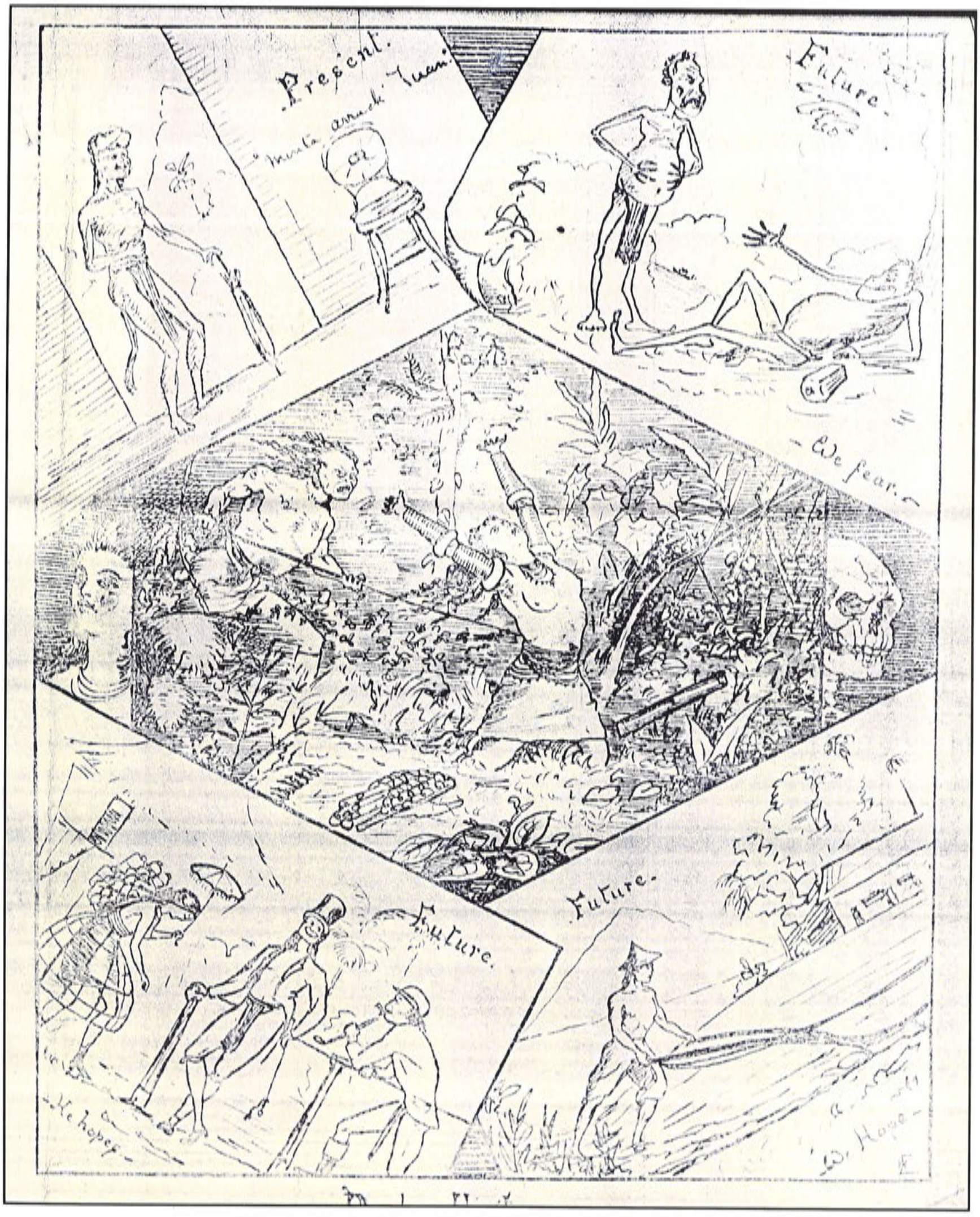
Kati sida ba rumah panjai, ke endor temuai ari luar negeri nemu enda ka sida dekena orang ka dagang temuai? Lebih agi baka gambar sida di ayang ka orang ba luar negeri?
(Do longhouse people know that longhouse tour operators use photos of Iban to sell the tours overseas and to attract tourists?)

Appendix D: Sarawak Tourism Board visitor arrival statistics 1990 - 2000

Citizenship	1990	%(+/-)	1991	%(+/-)	1992	%(+/-)	1993	%(+/-)	1994	%(+/-)	1995	%(+/-)
Singapore	29,623	4.99%	31,101	2.70%	31,942	1.58%	32,447	6.51%	34,559	2.46%	35,409	3.57%
Aust/N Z	9,256	11.54%	10,324	13.06%	11,672	11.13%	12,971	9.52%	14,206	1.66%	14.442	2.66%
Canada	3,535	-3.51%	3,411	29.76%	4,426	-6.80%	4,125	16.65%	4,812	13.42%	5,458	5.27%
Hong Kong	1,941	0.82%	1,957	-17.63%	1,612	-9.24%	1,463	24.88%	1,827	95.46%	3,571	-14.10%
India	2,152	10.55%	2.379	5.21%	2,503	-29.17%	1,773	20.19%	2,131	49.69%	3,190	-18.36%
UK/Ireland	19,579	20.24%	23,524	13.72%	26.773	2.35%	27.403	0.03%	27,411	10.61%	30,319	-0.31%
Brunei	189,630	12.69%	213,695	-2.83%	207,604	10.65%	229,750	40.35%	322,432	74.79%	563,571	-0.22%
USA	6,335	9.76%	6,953	21.34%	8,437	5.78%	8,925	5.13%	9,383	4.83%	9,836	-15.68%
China	151	545.03%	974	149.67%	2,422	5.53%	2,556	37.99%	3,527	15,34%	4,068	-0.85%
W. Europe	19,159	-1.45%	18,882	43.39%	27,074	0.37%	27,174	-53.74%	12,572	-17.79%	10,336	13.95%
E. Europe	218	12.39%	245	19.18%	292	-18.84%	237	89.87%	450	8.89%	490	113.73%
Philippines	6,284	49.11%	9,370	20.98%	11,336	-1.26%	11.193	5.85%	11.848	24.78%	14.784	3.07%
Indonesia	89,679	35.91%	121,880	12.36%	136,945	10.67%	151,551	4.30%	158,062	26.94%	200,642	-7.49%
Japan	6,981	11.93%	7,814	8.79%	8,501	7.29%	9,121	14.37%	10,432	16.87%	12,192	-13.61%
Taiwan	4,583	28.50%	5,889	23.93%	7,298	26.68%	9,245	22.38%	11,314	46.47%	16,572	-18.91%
Thailand	1,770	-10.85%	1,578	12.42%	1,774	0.62%	1,785	6.67%	1,904	17.07	2,229	2.60%
Others	43,517	13.16%	49,243	14.07%	56,171	-1.73%	55,202	58.22%	87,341	18.11%	103,157	1.42%
Total foreign Visitors	439,393	*17.23%*	509,237	*7.38%*	546,822	*7.33%*	586,921	*21.69%*	714,211	*44.25%*	1,030,266	*-1.27%*
Inter-state Malaysian Visitors	830,377	*17.31%*	974,134	*-25.54%*	725,304%	*78.01%*	1,291,126	*29.09%*	1,666,706	*13.58%*	1,893,017	*85.71%*
TOTAL	1,264770	*17.28%*	1,483,371	*-14.24%*	1,272,126	*47.63%*	1,878,047	*26.78%*	2,380,917	*22.78%*	2,923,263	43.19%

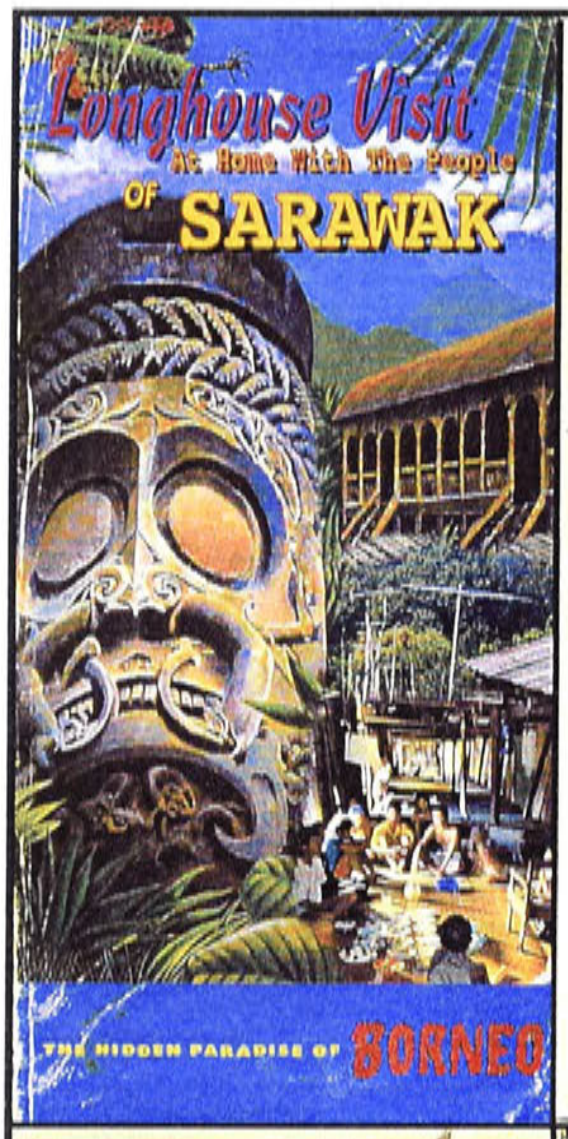
Citizenship	1996	%(+/-)	1997	%(+/-)	1998	%(+/-)	1999	%(+/-)	2000
Singapore	36,557	-15.52%	30,884	-1.67%	30,369	4.59%	31,764	2.50%	32,558
Aust/N Z	14,691	20.51%	17,704	11.35%	19,714	4.89%	20,678	-8.93%	18,832
Canada	5,852	7.69%	6,302	2.78%	6,477	-13.35%	5,612	2.21%	5,736
Hong Kong	3,065	-37.42%	1,918	-17.31%	1,586	-9.14%	1,441	-18.32%	1,177
India	3,739	3.82%	3,882	32.64%	5,149	-5.52%	4,865	12.31%	5,464
UK/Ireland	29,029	9.86%	31,892	-0.47%	33,855	N/a	33,697	-2.27%	32,933
Brunei	580,281	16.80%	677,764	25.00%	847,23	10.90%	854,818	-1.22%	844,416
USA	8,322	-4.65%	7,935	9.87%	8,718	-1.07%	8,625	6.25%	9,164
China	3,980	-12.14%	3,497	-5.00%	3,322	33.26%	4,427	22.25%	5,412
W. Europe	11,753	114.96%	35,264	-9.30%	22,914	-30.13%	16,011	1.44%	16,242
E. Europe	1,090	34.04%	1,461	-39.90%	878	-2.73%	854	41.92%	1,212
Philippines	15,313	45.80%	22,326	58.68%	35,427	3.00%	36,490	-12.68%	31,864
Indonesia	185,603	1.46%	188,318	19.02%	224,142	13.80%	255,079	7.19%	273,421
Japan	13,840	-9.26%	12,559	-19.75%	10,078	4.49%	10,531	9.84%	11,567
Taiwan	13,224	-1.65%	13,006	-21.13%	10,258	-7.53%	9,486	3.41%	9,809
Thailand	2,292	29.14%	3,289	25.96%	4,017	1.69%	3,949	14.76%	4,532
Others	104,624	-2.85%	101,928	15.42%	117,644	13.04%	132,981	42.93%	190,067
Total foreign Visitors	1,033, 256	*11.28%*	1,149,829	*20.17%*	1,381,779	*3.58%*	1,431,308	*4.41%*	1,494,406
Inter-state Malaysian Visitors	2,032,310	*62,25%*	2.078,067	*-9.31%*	1,884,543	*-0.44%*	1,876,159	*-4.60%*	1,789,809
TOTAL	3,065, 571	*5.30%*	3,227,896	*1.19%*	3,266,322	*1.26%*	3,307,467	*-0.70%*	3,286,215

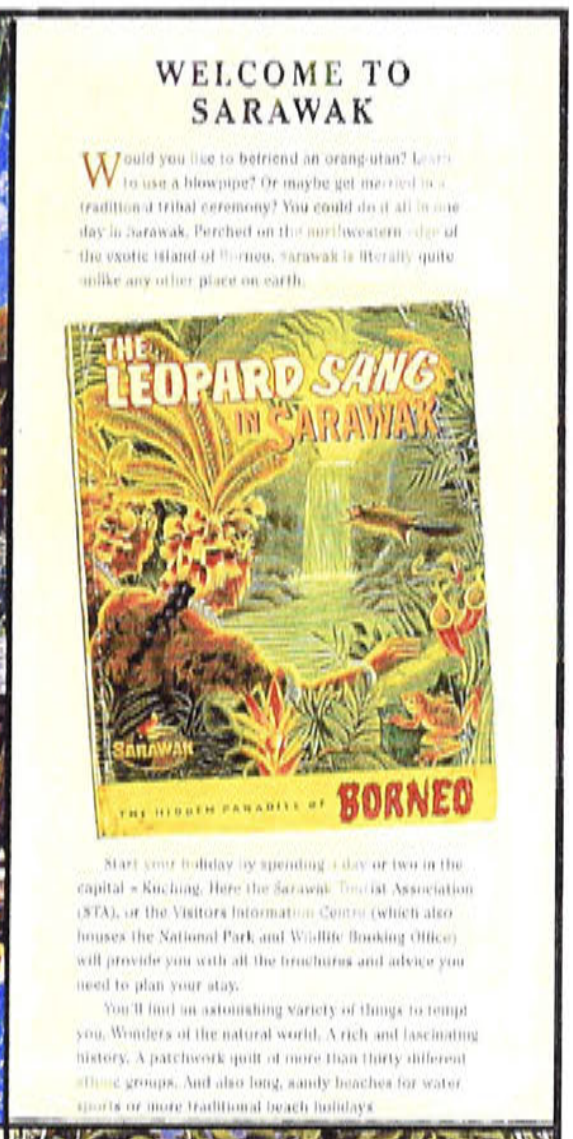
Appendix E: Frontispiece illustration from Everett, H. H. 1875. Waiting for the Tide or Scraps and Scrawls From Sarawak



Appendix F: Selected front covers and inside pages from Sarawak Tourism Board brochures 2001

Top left and bottom right are front covers. Top right and bottom left are inside pages.

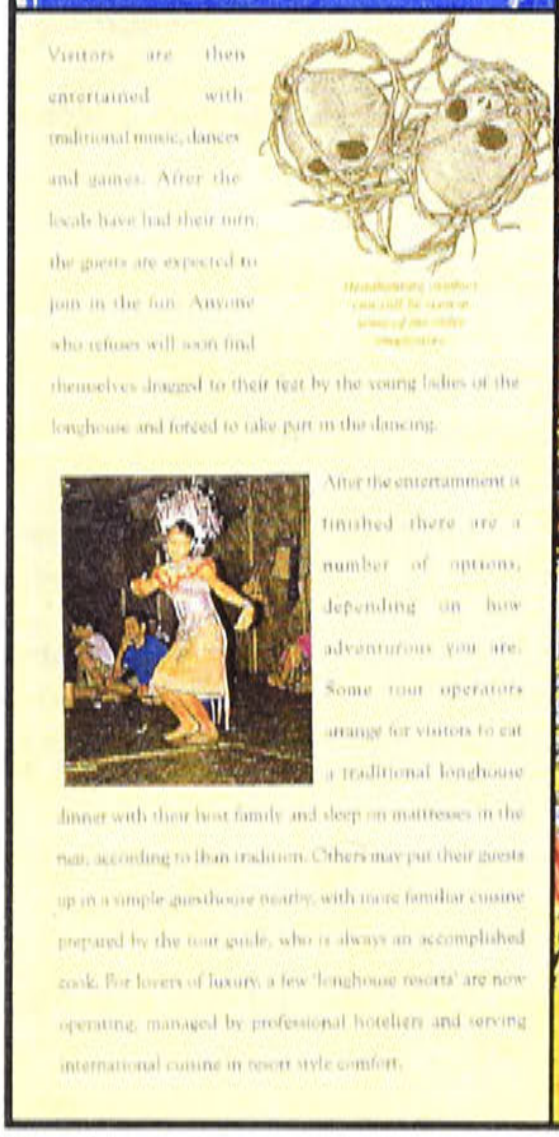



WELCOME TO SARAWAK

Would you like to befriend an orang-utan? Learn to use a blowpipe? Or maybe get married in a traditional tribal ceremony? You could do it all in one day in Sarawak. Perched on the northwestern edge of the exotic island of Borneo, Sarawak is literally quite unlike any other place on earth.

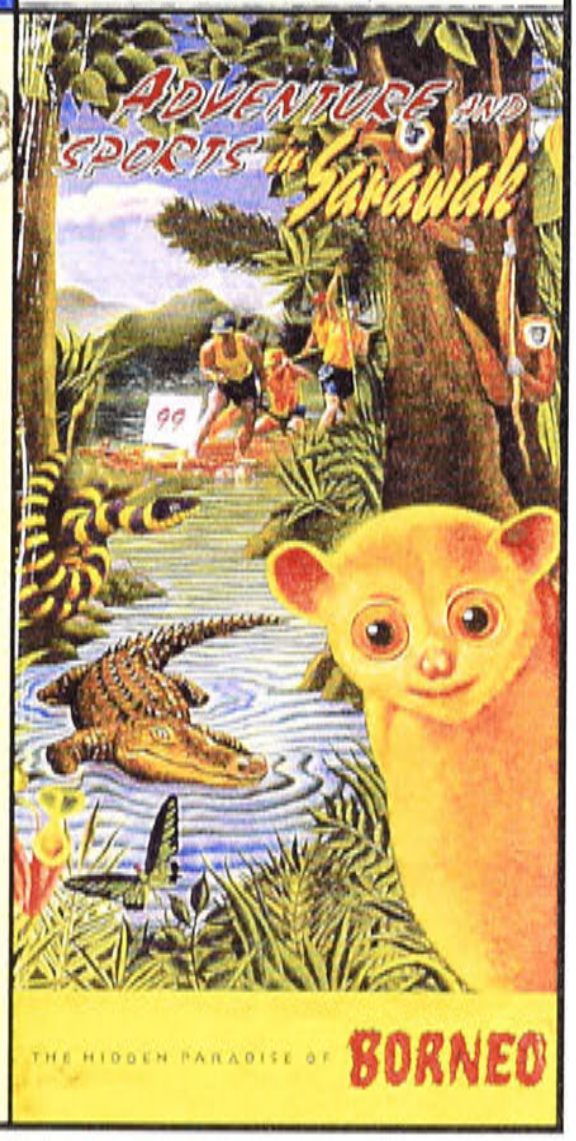
Start your holiday by spending a day or two in the capital – Kuching. Here the Sarawak Tourist Association (STA), or the Visitors Information Centre (which also houses the National Park and Wildlife Booking Office) will provide you with all the brochures and advice you need to plan your stay.

You'll find an astonishing variety of things to tempt you. Wonders of the natural world. A rich and fascinating history. A patchwork quilt of more than thirty different ethnic groups. And also long, sandy beaches for water sports or more traditional beach holidays.


Visitors are then entertained with traditional music, dances and games. After the locals have had their turn, the guests are expected to join in the fun. Anyone who refuses will soon find themselves dragged to their feat by the young ladies of the longhouse and forced to take part in the dancing.

Headhunting trophies can still be seen in some of the older longhouses

After the entertainment is finished there are a number of options, depending on how adventurous you are. Some tour operators arrange for visitors to eat a traditional longhouse dinner with their host family and sleep on mattresses in the room, according to Iban tradition. Others may put their guests up in a simple guesthouse nearby, with more familiar cuisine prepared by the tour guide, who is always an accomplished cook. For lovers of luxury, a few 'longhouse resorts' are now operating, managed by professional hoteliers and serving international cuisine in resort style comfort.



Appendix G: Tourism Charges Stamang Longhouse

Special Activities	Fee in Malaysian Ringgit $MYR
Porter	$10 per person for a day trip or $15 per person overnight, fee paid directly to porters.
Hunter	$10 per person for a day trip and paid directly to the hunter.
Marriage ceremony	Approximately $100, fee paid to community fund.
Ritual song, parable (*pantun*)	$5. Only one performer required for a 4-minute song, fee paid directly to performer.
Site rental for guesthouse	$100 per month paid 6 monthly.
Cemetery visit (*jalai pendam*)	$5 one longhouse guide required, fee paid directly to the guide.
Headhunter attack by river bank	$500-$800 negotiated fee depending on size of group and scale of attack.
Housekeeper for guesthouse	$150 paid every six months.

Standard Activity	Fee in Malaysian Ringgit $MYR
Head Tax (*cukai pala*).	$10 per person or $7 per person for groups above ten. Fee paid to longhouse fund.
Traditional dance display (*ngajat*), minimum four dancers required.	$8 paid to each individual dancer.
Mask dance, minimum four dancers required.	$4 per person and paid to individual dancers.
Gong playing (*betabuh*), minimum four players required	$4 per person and paid to individual players.
Consumables, rice, tea and coffee (*beras*).	$10 for every ten persons or less (once-off charge with tour) and paid to cover costs to *bilik*-family supplying consumables.
Rice wine (*tuak*)	$3 per bottle, paid to *bilik*-family supplying wine.
Distilled rice wine (*langkau*)	$3 per bottle, paid to *bilik*-family supplying *langkau*.
Blowpipe demonstration (*nyumpit*). Only one demonstrator required.	$10 paid directly to demonstrator.
Cockfight (*nyabong*), includes two demonstrators and two cocks.	$10 flat fee paid directly to demonstrators and usually split between the two.
Jungle walk (*jalan hutan*). Only one local guide required.	$10 paid directly to local guide.
Generator Fuel (*minyak api*).	$15 per night, paid directly to *Tuai Rumah* to cover costs for fuel.
Head man fee (*cukai Tuai Rumah*)	$10 flat fee for every group, paid directly to *Tuai Rumah*.

Standard Activity	Fee in Malaysian Ringgit $MYR
Laundering, bed changing and washing of sheets (*tulong temuai*). Minimum of two helpers per group.	$10 per person and paid directly to the helpers.
Cooking assistant (*pemasak*). Minimum two assistants per group.	$10 paid to directly to assistants, groups above 10 required 3 assistants.
Boatman (*ngambi temuai*). Fee includes boatman and separate bailer/punter.	$50 per return trip paid directly to boatman and usually split between two. Fee includes waiting all day on stand-by at jetty for tourists to arrive.
Lunch by riverbank (*makai ba sungai*)	$80-$120, includes payment for petrol, boatman, bailer/punter, tea, coffee, rice, and rice wine (other food supplied by tour company). Fee determined by distance travelled and paid directly to boatman and usually split between two.
Standard welcoming ceremony (*miring*), one performer only.	$50, for tour groups below 15 people, fee paid to longhouse fund.
Medium welcoming ceremony, including two performers.	$100, fee paid to longhouse fund.
Grand welcoming ceremony, including several performers.	$100-$300, price varies according to group size. Ceremony includes small piglet, fee paid to longhouse fund.
Vegetables from the forest supplied for various meals.	$5 (feeds four persons), paid to *bilik*-family supplying vegetables.
Fishing demonstration (*nyala*).	$10 paid directly to demonstrator (one demonstrator only)

Appendix H: AOS letter

Letter provided by AOS to Sarawak Assistant Minister for Tourism YB Dr James Masing as part of request for funding to assist with rebuilding Stamang as a model tourist longhouse.

ASIAN OVERLAND SERVICES TOURS AND TRAVEL SDN BHD
286a 1 st Floor Westwood Park
Jalan Tabuan 93200
Kuching,Sarawak
Tel:60 82 251162/3
Fax:60 82 251178
e-mail:lpa@pc.jaring.my
KKKP 2120

From:LEMON PRADDY ALES
Branch Manager
AOS Kuching

Date:3rd July 1996

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

ASIAN OVERLAND SERVICES TOURS AND TRAVEL SDN BHD has been given the exclusivity by the Penghulu Rentap and Tuai Rumah Sunok together with the longhouse committee to bring tourists and visitors to Ng Stamang.
Stamang longhouse is also the first eco project undertaken by AOS with the concept of Adoption.

Followings are the statistic of tourists arrival to Stamang since opening its doors to tourism in 1992.

1992-mostly travel writers/journalists/travel agents fam-trips to Stamang sponsored by AOS.

1993——————695 tourists visited Stamang average stay of 2 days at the longhouse.
1994——————872 ""
1995——————789arrivals drops mainly FIT's only.but length of stay increase to 3 days.
1996-(1st 6mths)—969 increase due to series groups and Incentive groups.

up to date there are altogether 3,325 bona fide tourists arrivals at Stamang for the past 4 years Stamang Longhouse Tourism Destination plays a very important role in the development of tourism Industry in the Batang ai region.

Income:1993-1995-an average of rm211/-per bilik.
Income generated from utilisation of boats,allowances for jungle trekking and other activities.
This does not include the income generated from sales of handicrafts,weaving and mats.

The above information is just a guide line for future references.

report by lemon.

Appendix I: Entertaining tourists during a mourning period

Early in the morning of 29 March 1996 an old woman from Stamang died in her sleep. From early morning, the bereaved family gathered around the body, which was lying in state in the *ruai* surrounded by offerings. Other longhouse residents gathered next to the body in the *ruai* to show their respect and there was much wailing and crying.

Unfortunately a tour group was due to arrive the same day on a two-day/one-night tour. At sunrise Pengulu Rentap tried to call AOS to cancel the tour but the mobile phone the company had supplied was not working.[1] Accordingly, the longhouse was unable to get a message to Kuching before the tour group departed for Stamang and the community was immediately apprehensive, knowing that the group would be arriving imminently, at a time when residents were grieving and did not feel like entertaining tourists. Further, the deceased's *bilik* was closest to the entrance of the longhouse and it adjoined the specially-built tourist *bilik*. As the body was lying in state at precisely the point the tourists would enter the longhouse and next to where they would sleep residents felt that it would disturb the tourists and, in particular, that the smell would be a problem.

However, most importantly, the imminent arrival of the tourists was in breach of Iban *adat*. Traditionally, *adat* requires that visitors who arrive at a longhouse during a mourning period go elsewhere, or, if that is unfeasible, they may enter and stay but must pay a fine. In addition, it is a requirement that during the mourning period the longhouse community refrain from any entertainment or celebration. The custom is, to my knowledge, still widely practised in Iban longhouses and is well-known among the non-Iban citizens of Sarawak. Travellers (including traders, officials, relatives and so on) will often inquire whether it is appropriate to travel to a particular community so that they do not arrive during a mourning period. The ubiquitous nature of the

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[1] AOS had supplied Pengulu Rentap with a second-hand FM mobile phone so that the longhouse community and the Kuching branch office could inform each other of any problems affecting upcoming tours For example, sometimes AOS needed to inform the longhouse of a sudden change to a tour schedule or, alternatively, the community might need to inform AOS there were floodwaters on the river, making it impassable by longboat or, as in the case above, of a death in the community. In reality the phone was mostly useless because it did not work in most weather conditions and outgoing calls could only be made from the top of a nearby hill with an antenna attached to a long bamboo pole.

mourning custom was also recognised by the AOS in its fact sheet on tourism to Stamang in which the company made clear that residents had the right to refuse tour groups 'during cultural events and funerals' (see Chapter Seven).

The Iban scholar, Henry Ngadi, describes the custom in the following way:

> At the family level mourning is a very solemn period. No music may be played in the household. No member of the family will put on new or brightly coloured clothing, nor any form of ornament...No member of the family will take part in any form of merriment or festival, unless in very special circumstances, but ritual compensation has to be made. The family has the rite to fine anyone who violates any of the mourning rites observed by the family...The three month mourning period is also observed by the entire longhouse. Merriment and music are forbidden....No shouts of joy may be made either inside or outside the house. Any merry entourage or group...passing the vicinity of the longhouse may pay a fine to the mourning longhouse. A visitor entering the longhouse must not come in richly attired dress (Ngadi 1998:55-56)

At the time of the old woman's death at Stamang, I asked residents about how the mourning custom impacted upon planned tourism activities. I was advised by Pengulu Rentap that on a previous occasion a tour group had arrived on the same day as a death in the longhouse had occurred and that, after discussion, the community had agreed that tourists were not forbidden during mourning, but that they would have to collectively pay a fine of $50 MYR to the family of the deceased and the company would have to pay a separate $50 MYR to the longhouse. He explained that the fine paid by the company would go into the longhouse community fund, benefiting the longhouse as whole, and that the fine paid by the tourists would assist the deceased's family with funeral costs and compensate for the breach of *adat*. This change in earlier *adat* rules about mourning had come about in response to the imperatives of the longhouse as a tourist destination and a business.

That afternoon when the tourists (a group of four) arrived at Stamang, Pengulu Rentap (assisted by the tour guide) explained that the longhouse was in mourning and that if the tour was to continue a $50 MYR fine would have to be paid.[2] In response, the tourists communicated to their guide that they did not wish to disturb the residents at such an unfortunate time and suggested that they either cancel the tour (with a full refund) and return to Kuching or relocate to the next longhouse down river (Spaya), which also received tourists.

The guide explained to the tourists that continuing the tour presented no difficulty, because paying the fine compensated for any offence caused by the unhappy timing of their visit. Somewhat reluctantly (and partly because the language barrier prevented them having any real control over the situation) the tourists agreed to pay the fine 'on-the-spot' and continue the tour. In addition, at their own instigation the tourists gave the relevant *bilik*-family a generous cash donation towards the purchase of a coffin for the deceased woman.

Once the fine was paid the tour program proceeded in the normal manner until just after dinner when the guide asked Pengulu Rentap to tell the dancers to begin preparing for their performance and to organise residents to be present in the *ruai* for the associated merrymaking session. This request resulted in a heated discussion between some longhouse residents and the guide. Pengulu Rentap, Tui Rumah Sonuk and members of the deceased's *bilik*-family argued that, although the community had agreed that the tourists could stay, they had assumed that the dancing and entertainment program would not proceed (which had been the case previously when tourists had arrived during a mourning period). The guide argued that because residents had accepted the payment of the fine (and the extra donation from the tourists) the tour should proceed in its entirety. During the argument the guide made clear to the residents that AOS expected entertainment regardless of the circumstances within the longhouse, because the company was paying for a service and expected the community to behave in a business-like fashion. Without discussing the matter with the tourists, the guide persisted with his demands for the dance performance on the basis that if the program was not followed the tourists might complain about the standard of the tour offered and ask for their money back. The guide suggested that, without dancing, the tourists would complain about the hospitality standards of the longhouse, Stamang would get a 'bad name' and tourist numbers would decrease, reducing profit for both AOS and the community. Later, when I spoke with the guide in private, he expressed a fear that if the tourists complained about the quality of the tour to AOS's head office in Kuala Lumpur he might be sacked.

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[2] A further $50 MYR fine was paid by AOS.

During the argument, Pengulu Rentap stated that the guide's request for entertainment was inappropriate because the community was grieving and because it was in breach of *adat*, especially as the body was still lying in state in the *ruai* and had yet to be placed in a coffin and taken to the cemetery across the river. He also repeated that it was appropriate *adat* that AOS and the tourists pay a fine to allow the tour to continue in a limited form. After several minutes of heated discussion, which included the family of the deceased storming off in disgust, Pengulu Rentap relented and said that he would see if any residents were willing to dance for the tourists but that he would ask for the performance to be short, out of respect for the *bilik*-family of the deceased.

That evening the full program of tourist entertainment went ahead, including dancing, with musical accompaniment, games and a *tuak* drinking session. The entertainment was staged in the normal place outside Tuai Rumah Sunok's *bilik*, while the body of the deceased lay several metres away in a more dimly lit area of the *ruai*. Only a small number of longhouse residents participated in the staged merrymaking session that night, as most were occupied paying their respects and many were gathered with the deceased's *bilik*-family members next to her body in the *ruai*. Many residents were unhappy about the evening's entertainment, stating to the guide, '*tusah hati aku, enggai ngajat malam tu*', I'm miserable this evening and don't want dancing'. It is important to remember here that although Pengulu Rentap acquiesced to the tour guide's request and sought dancers to provide entertainment for tourists, his role as *Pengulu* was only that of a spokesperson and he was not in a position to order or demand that residents perform. Those residents who danced elected to do so autonomously and they chose tourism work instead of observing traditional mourning rites in defiance of those community members who felt the dancing should not proceed.

The guide's request for the dancing and merrymaking session during the mourning period was in stark contrast to AOS's stated policy that residents could refuse to entertain tourists in these sorts of circumstances and highlights the significant gap between AOS's promotional rhetoric and its commercial imperatives. In fact, some residents suggested that AOS would 'blame them' if the tourists were not satisfied with their tour and they felt that they had no choice other than to provide the full

entertainment program if they wanted to continue with the tourism business. In addition, the story illustrates the difficulties that can occur between *bilik*-families because of the need to manage the longhouse as a single business providing a service in circumstances where *bilik*-families disagree about the approach that should be taken.

Appendix J: Copy of 1991 letter from Borneo Sunshine Tours to the Tui Rumah of Demong longhouse

Dear Tuai Rumah

I would like to say a big thank you to you and all the people of Demong longhouse for your co-operation with us to make the tourists welcome in your longhouse. For 1991 I would like very much to look to all your support to make it even better for the benefit for all of us. Please take note of some of the matters we need to improve with the helping hand from all of you as stated below.

For individual dancing please advise them to dance longer and the warrior dancers must be with shield.

For group dancing please advise them to make three rounds.

For special welcoming ceremonies please advise them to pre-arrange offerings at the *tanju*.

For the blow pipe demonstrator please advise him to bring along knife for tapping rubber trees.

Posters and TV ariels are not to be displayed openly at the *ruai* and *tanju*.

Bridge and jungle path are to make the jungle walk more safe and interesting.

More people are needed to be presented at the *ruai* to make the tourists feel welcome.

Please take note that for the kitchen helpers we will pay M$5.00 per person in the evening and M$5.00 per person in the morning but helpers must bring along firewood for cooking.

We will bring along our own rice or buy directly from the helpers.

We look forward to your strong support.

Thankyou

Appendix K: List of AOS awards to 1995

1987: Certificate of Merit in the most creative tour package category for 'Malaysian Jungle Adventure and Bamboo Rafting'. Awarded by the Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism.

1988: Malaysian Tourism Gold Award for excellence in the tour package category for 'Taman Negara Jungle Safari'. Awarded by the Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism.

1989: Award of Achievement for excellent performance and invaluable contribution to the 'Ferrenghi Beach Hotel, Penang'. Awarded by the Federal Hotel International.

1990: Certificate of Merit for best in-bound tour operator. Awarded by the Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism.

1992: Certificate of Merit for best incentive programme. Awarded by the Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism.

1993: Tourism Malaysia Awards – Gold Award for best tour operator. Awarded by the Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism.

1993: Tourism Malaysia Awards – Gold Award for best incentive package. Awarded by the Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism.

1994: Award of Achievement for excellence in performance and invaluable contribution to the 'Ferringhi Beach Hotel, Penang'. Awarded by the Federal Hotel International.

1995: Travel Award for Best In-bound Tour Operator (Asia-Pacific). Awarded by the Asian Business Group.

Appendix L: Pseudonyms

Longhouses	Tour Operators/Individuals	Tour Campanies
Lembat	James Fong	Borneo Sunshine
Uyut	Henry Tang	Borneo Heartland
Sulang	Simon Chia	Jungle Discovery Tours
Tindin	Charles Jimbai	Kenyalang Travel
Randin	Robert De Silva	Tropical Adventure
Demong	Charles Ukar	
Bayang		
Kudi		
Gunggu		

Glossary of frequently used terms

The following definitions are based on my own understanding of the terms as they are used in Iban.

Adat — Customary law, conventions, customs, basic values, manners, code of conduct and culture. In everyday usage the term is used to refer to local customary laws as well as those codified under the *Native Customary Laws Ordinance (The Adat Iban order) 1996*. In Iban religion correct adherence to *adat* ensures the universe is balanced. The term can be used more broadly to refer to Iban culture and way of life.

Antu Pala — Trophy heads collected in battle or on a headhunting raid.

Bedurok — Traditional system of labour exchange (often practiced during the rice harvest).

Bejalai — Widely-practiced Iban custom that involves men travelling away from home for extended periods to seek paid work and adventure.

Belian — Ironwood.

Berandau — Conversation, meeting. To hold a general discussion.

Beras — Uncooked milled or husked rice.

Bilik — Room, apartment, the walled-in section of a longhouse that belongs to a single *bilik*-family.

Bilik-family — The family grouping that inhabits a *bilik* and that forms the basic social unit of Iban longhouse society.

Dapur	Hearth, fireplace for cooking, kitchen.
Dayak	Non-Muslim (non-Malay) Indigenous inhabitants of Sarawak and Borneo.
Gawai	Festival, party with religious rites, feast, celebration, ritual. There are many different types of *gawai* festival, such as *Gawai Antu* (final rites for the dead), and *Gawai Matah Padi* (rite to begin the padi harvest). In spoken Iban the term may simply be used to refer to any kind of party. In Sarawak vernacular *gawai* is often used to refer to the public holiday *Gawai Dayak* held on May 31 every year.
Gaya Iban	Iban style or manner, Iban lifestyle.
Ili	Downriver, down river country, downstream.
Jalan	The Malay word for a road or path. The term also means to walk, travel, journey and go on a trip. In Iban the term is *Jalai*, hence the term *bejalai,* meaning to go travelling.
Langkau	Distilled rice wine or arrack.
Miring	An offering of food to deities.
Nanga	The mouth of a river, tributary or estuary. Longhouses are often situated near a tributary flowing into a larger river and are often referred to by the name of the tributary, such as Nanga Stamang.
Ngajat	Dance with gong or an entertaining mime. The term is used to refer to traditional dance as well as modern dance.

Nyayap	Courting at night. The courting usually involves a young man sneaking into the *bilik* of a young women in whom he is interested and slipping under her mosquito net to talk with her in private. If the woman is interested she will talk with him under the net. If she is not interested a lamp (or flashlight) will be turned on and the man will be offered a drink before being politely asked to leave.
Orang Putih	A person of European heritage, a white person, a foreigner, a tourist. Occasionally used to refer to any other light-coloured foreigners, such as Taiwanese.
Padi	Rice before it has been removed from the husk, unhusked rice, the rice plant itself.
Pemansang	Development, economic development. From the word *mansang*, to move forward, to advance, to progress.
Pendiau Iban	Iban mode of life, Iban living, Iban lifestyle.
Pengulu	The elected head of a group of longhouses, usually on a river or within a river basin. The holder of the third-grade post in the hierarchy of chiefs.
Penhidup Iban	Iban livelihood, Iban lifestyle.
Ruai	The open gallery of a longhouse.
Rumah Panjai	A longhouse.
Tangga	The carved notched wooden log entrance ladder to a longhouse. A ladder.

Tanju	The rice-drying verandah or uncovered front porch of a longhouse.
Tuai Rumah	The elected head and the recognised representative of a longhouse who deals with outsiders, officials, and litigants.
Sumpit	Blowpipe.
Temuai	Visitor, guest, stranger. Used in tourist longhouses as a polite term for 'tourist'.
Turis	A tourist.
Ulu	Upriver, upriver country, upstream, headwaters.
Untong	Profit, windfall, gain. Derogatory slang term for 'tourist' in longhouses that receive tourists.

Abbreviations

AOS	Asian Overland Services Tours and Travel
AUD	Australian Dollars
BT	Borneo Transverse Tours
BS	Borneo Sunshine Tour Company
CPH	Choo Poh Hin Travel Agency
JDT	Jungle Discovery Tours
MYR	Malaysian Ringgit
SALCRA	Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
SEDC	Sarawak Economic Development Corporation
STA	Sarawak Travel Association
STB	Sarawak Tourism Board
UK	United Kingdom
USD	United States dollars.

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